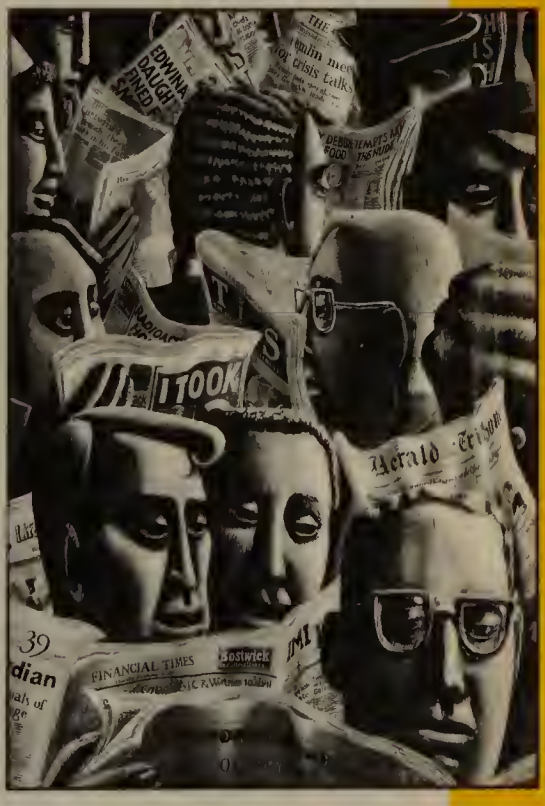
Colin Seymour-Ure

The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945

SECOND EDITION



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The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945

Second edition

Colin Seymour-Ure

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General Editor's Preface

The Institute of Contemporary British History's series *Making Contemporary Britain* is almed directly at students and at others interested in learning more about topics in post-war British history. In the series, authors are less attempting to break new ground than presenting clear and balanced overviews of the state of knowledge on each of the topics.

The ICBH was founded in October 1986 with the objective of promoting the study of British history since 1945 at every level. To that end, it publishes books and a quarterly journal, *Contemporary Record*; it organizes seminars and conferences for school students, undergraduates, researchers and teachers of post-war history; and it runs a number of research programmes and other activities.

A central theme of the ICBH's work is that post-war history is too often neglected in British schools, institutes of higher education and beyond. The ICBH acknowledges the validity of the arguments against the study of recent history, notably the problems of bias, of overly subjective teaching and writing, and the difficulties of perspective. But it believes that the values of studying post-war history outweigh the drawbacks, and that the health and future of a liberal democracy require that its citizens know more about the most recent past of their country than the limited knowledge possessed by British citizens, young and old, today. Indeed, the ICBH believes that the dangers of political indoctrination are higher where the young are *not* informed of the recent past. There are many books on the contemporary media in Britain, examining its ownership, structure, influences and importance. Many excellent autobiographical accounts have also been written by those who worked in the rapidly developing media since the war.

But no book has appeared until now describing and analysing the revolution that has occurred in the British media over the last forty-five years. Television and other new outlets have started up and radio and the printed media have changed beyond recognition. Without some knowledge of these developments, it is impossible to gain a full understanding of the media today.

Colin Seymour-Ure's book should be read with profit by all students, practitioners and observers of the rich and diverse media in Britain.

The second edition of this deservedly popular textbook on the media in Britain is much more than a casual updating and 'scissors and paste job'. The author has rewritten large sections to take account of new information, literature and events. In many ways it deserves to be treated as a new book. As a survey of fifty years on press and broadcasting history, it cannot be bettered.

Anthony Seldon

Preface to First Edition

This book is mainly about the press and broadcasting – who controlled them, what was available and how they related to one another – in the years 1945–90. It tries to be more than a contemporary look with glances backward, but it is not resolutely chronological. It avoids many issues that get intense scrutiny at particular moments: 'bias' of various kinds; influence on violence; 'effects' in general. There is ample literature about these and an historical account would be too much like an ancient map of the world: large wastes of conjecture punctuated by occasional islands of knowledge.

The scope of the subject makes the book necessarily selective and impressionistic. Its general focus, in the second half, is on the theme of media accountability, and in particular upon the see-saw of influence between media and government. Who is accountable to whom? As TV has spread into our lives, embracing (sometimes suffocating) other media, this theme is more important than ever.

I am most grateful for the help given by Andrew Cree in the early stages of preparing the book, and for enjoyable discussions with students taking the political communications option at the University of Kent. I owe special thanks to Nicola Kerry for her speed and skill in typing the manuscript and tables.

Colin Seymour-Ure

Preface to Second Edition

Five years on, the period 1945–90 looks even more like a tidy slice of history than it did in 1990. The Broadcasting Act of that year marks its end. The new edition of this book, even so, focuses on the fifty-year period up to 1995 as a whole, and within the same structure of chapters as before. Additional material has tipped the balance further towards the last ten years, especially in chapters 4 and 5 about broadcasting and media empires, but the book's aim is still to enable readers to study contemporary characteristics, trends and issues with an awareness of how and why the press and broadcasting became what they now are. The coming electronic glut (if such it proves) puts even more importance than before upon the questions of accountability raised in the later chapters. In the trio of government, media and citizens, whose appetites are most gross and who needs curbing? More than in 1990, the government looks for a co-ordinated media policy; media conglomerates hog the market; viewers relish sex and violence on film, video, TV, the Internet – which lobbyists claim corrupt them.

Preparation of this edition was much helped by study leave from the University of Kent at Canterbury and by a Visiting Fellowship for the Spring semester, 1995, at the Joan Shorenstein Center in the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. I am most grateful to both institutions. Above all I am grateful, more than I can say, to my wife Judy for her support.

Colin Seymour-Ure
Canterbury, July 1995

1 Snapshot: 1945/1995

British media changed so much between 1945 and 1995 that it may be best to begin with contrasting snapshots of these two years.

1945

There was no television. About ten million households had a radio set and most were run off the mains, not off a battery. The compulsory annual licence fee cost ten shillings (50p). You had a choice of two BBC stations. One was 'serious'; the other broadcast light music and entertainment. The nine o'clock evening news had an audience of half the population during the war, but this fell quickly in 1945. Quite a lot of people listened to light music on Radio Luxembourg. You could also hear music at home on a wind-up gramophone with ten- or twelve-inch 78 r.p.m. bakelite records. These played for only a few minutes at a time.

Most people read one of nine London-edited, 'national' morning newspapers, delivered through the letter-box. If it was the *Daily Mirror* or *Daily Sketch*, it was tabloid. If not – and those papers had less than a quarter of the total circulation – it was broadsheet. Because of paper rationing it had only four to eight pages, unless it was *The Times*, which averaged nine. Most of the contents were news, not features. One person in five, mainly in the big cities, bought a locally published morning paper as well or instead. Local evening papers were smaller but more numerous (76 compared with 29). Londoners had a choice of three evening papers. Even more people read a Sunday paper than a daily, often for the sport. Nearly 750 towns had weekly papers.

The national dailies differed sharply in style between the low-circulation 'qualities' and the mass-circulation 'populars'. All nine were separately owned, mainly by elderly barons (barons in fact and in managerial style), such as Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Kemsley. They also owned Sunday papers. Lord Kemsley and Lord Rothermere owned chains of provincial dailies too. The barons were politically partisan – mostly Conservative – and you expected your paper to play a vigorous part for or against Mr Churchill in the 1945 general election campaign. The BBC did not report the election at all until polling day, but it provided time for nightly talks by party leaders, up to half-an-hour in length.

On the news-stands, there were several popular illustrated weekly news and feature magazines: *Everybody's, Illustrated, Picture Post*. There were numerous general magazines and a growing market in women's weeklies and monthlies. Colour was limited. The brightest splash in the newsagent was probably the display of orange and green Penguin paperbacks – the main paperbacks available. 6,747 book titles were published. Boots and W. H. Smith ran cheap circulating libraries, supplementing the public libraries.

Regularly you went to the cinema. Thirty million cinema tickets a week were sold in 1945. *The Times* still listed cinemas as 'Picture Theatres'. The short weekly 'newsreels', a mixture of news and feature stories, gave a foretaste of TV news. Hollywood products dominated. In addition to the feature film, you saw a shorter, low budget, 'B movie'. Films were censored for decency by Local Authorities, with the aid of an independent board.

In the press, 'taste' was largely a matter of editorial discretion. Four-letter words and topless girls were taboo. Tasteful, airbrushed nudes appeared in light monthly magazines such as *Lilliput* and *Men Only*.

1995

There was almost no escape from television. Two homes out of three had two or more TV sets and one quarter had three. (The second set was generally in the main bedroom and the third in a child's room.) Nearly everyone had colour. ITV broadcast virtually round the clock. Viewers had a choice of four terrestrial channels. Between them, BBC1,

BBC2, ITV Channel 3 and Channel 4 provided some 560 hours of pogrammes a week. The licence fee was £84.50, all of which went to the BBC. ITV was paid for by advertisements, carefully regulated by the Independent Television Commission.

If your town was cabled and you were one of more than 700,000 people who paid a subscription, you could get a variety of extra specialised channels such as sport and movies. More likely, you lived in one of about 12 per cent of households which subscribed to Rupert Murdoch's Sky (strictly, BSkyB) satellite channel, launched in 1989. Half of us had Teletext on our TV. One-quarter used the set for video games: these were selling at the rate of 2 million a year. Four-fifths of us had a video player, which was used mainly to watch films and soap operas – either hired (328 million transactions last year), purchased (60 million), or taped from broadcasts.

We spent nearly twenty-six hours a week watching TV: news, chat shows, soap operas, films, the House of Commons, endless studio discussion among politicians. Snooker was the most popular televised sport: only one team game was among the TV top ten. TV was the nation's main evening activity.

We spent 16½ hours a week listening to the radio – but mainly while doing something else. The BBC had five national stations and 38 locals. There were three national commercial stations, licensed by the Radio Authority and including the very successful Classic FM. Commercial local radio was everywhere. Stations mostly broadcast music and 'chat'. BBC Radio 4 was for news and talk; Radio 3, for classical music. You could listen almost any time, anywhere – especially with your Walkman headset that filtered nothing but a mildly irritating hiss to passengers in your bus or train compartment. As much as 85 per cent of cars had a radio, and over half were used whenever the car was driven. Half had a cassette player too. A quarter of us had four radio sets or more.

Music of high technical quality was available in the home through CDs, cassette tapes, LPs and pop videos. CD sales overtook cassettes in 1992. Older members of a family went out of the house to get away from music, not in search of it.

Despite TV, three-fifths of us still read a daily newspaper. The dominance of the national press had increased. Of eleven main dailies, six were tabloids with 80 per cent of the circulation. Your paper had 30–40 pages or more; a large proportion of features; regular colour. If it

was a broadsheet, it came in sections and might have pages of small ads. Your Sunday paper might have even more sections, some of which you were still reading the following week. If you wanted an illustrated weekly magazine, you could get one free, in excellent colour, with a Saturday or Sunday paper. Fewer people now read an evening paper: if they did, it was primarily to see what was on TV. Only nineteen provincial morning papers survived, so there was less opportunity to read one anyway. Thirteen towns outside London had a choice of local dailies. Two-fifths of us bought a local weekly paper, and nearly 90 per cent of households received an unsolicited 'free weekly', financed by advertising. Many of these contained little editorial copy. In London, only one evening paper survived, despite an unsuccessful attempt by Robert Maxwell to establish a new one in 1987.

The national dailies were bunched into eight ownership groups, headed by Rupert Murdoch, Conrad Black, the latest Lord Rothermere and others. More than in 1945, these men controlled multimedia organizations, with interests in TV, radio, film, video, computer products, recorded music and book publishing, as well as newspapers and magazines. Moreover their interests were international, and they generally included non-media businesses too. In the 1992 general election they presented you with a partisan newspaper, as in 1945: nearly all were rooting for John Major, although they soon grew disillusioned with him.

The news-stands were a blaze of glossy colour. In London's Victoria Station, a kiosk displayed over 800 magazines – 40 on computing, half-a-dozen about the Internet, 70 on music and hi-fi, others on skateboarding, home freezers, body-building, and many other categories (including soft porn) that in 1945 did not exist. The traditional women's magazines, hugely successful in the 1950s, had slumped. Penguin books had changed their distinctive format. Paperbacks in general had pushed aside the hardback, except for the specialized and coffee table markets. The commercial lending libraries had disappeared. Book publishing had soared to more than 80,000 new titles, including 8000 novels. Reference books, in particular, including the *Oxford English Dictionary*, were becoming available on CD-Rom. Many bookshops had shelves of videos and of books on audio-tape.

You very rarely went to the cinema, unless you were youngish and middle class. Attendances were about two million a week – double what they had been at the low point in 1984. If you did go, you saw one main

film and had ample opportunity to buy junk food. Film was still censored, but by more liberal standards than in 1945.

Use of the Internet was growing explosively. By mid-1995, 300,000 computers were connected to it. The leading access company in the UK, Compuserve, had more than 100,000 subscribers, steadily growing (and 3 million worldwide). The *Daily Telegraph* produced an on-line version. So did *Time Out* and the Press Association – and any number of overseas papers, especially in the United States.

Could you be more easily shocked by media in 1995 than in 1945? It is difficult to know. If you were, there was certainly more scope to complain. The Press Complaints Commission, Broadcasting Complaints Commission, Broadcasting Standards Council and Advertising Standards Authority were at your disposal. Only the latter had teeth.

2 Which Media? What History?

How much of those snapshots might a history of mass media study? The term 'mass media' itself was not widely used until the 1960s. (Its first appearance in the index to *The Times*, not a bad indicator, was in 1965). A history of mass media from 1945 must thus impose a common character upon a set of – what? Organizations? Technologies? Information sources? – which either went by a different name or was not recognised at that time.

Everyone agrees that newspapers and TV are mass media. Indeed the history of this period could be seen very largely as a process of adjustment by and to TV. But what about books – and cinema? Or is film, not cinema, the mass medium? What is 'TV', anyway? In 1946, when post-war service began, the TV set sat in the corner for most of the time, as the service lasted for only about four hours a day. Early TV sets sometimes had doors, which you folded back to reveal the screen when it was time to watch. ITV was allowed about seven hours a day when it started in 1955; and long before the growth of home computers, VCRs and video games in the 1980s, of course, the TV set had become a main focus (often *the* focus) of the living room. But with the growth of these other uses, what exactly did it mean by 1995 to say that 'TV' was a mass medium? Was a TV programme the same thing whether it came to your set by satellite, by cable, by terrestrial transmitter or by videotape?

'Mass medium' thus turns out to be one of those terms, apparently simple, that grow more elusive upon analysis. Partly this may be because the term gained currency precisely in response to the proliferation of media and the lack of a suitable umbrella word to cover them. Beyond that, uncertainty is caused by the fact that different media commonly

take their names from different elements in the communication process. Any completed act of communication, from a conversation between two people to a summit communiqué beamed by world leaders round the globe, involves (to quote an old formulation) 'a sender, message, medium and receiver'. A further source of names is the purpose for which the communication takes place, such as advertising or news.

If we say the *Sun* is a mass medium we name a news organization (a 'sender') and a technology for distributing 'messages' (a 'medium'). If we say *newspapers* are a mass medium we refer to a particular kind of 'message' – news. (Contrast the name 'magazine', using the same technology but suggesting a less news-based idea.) If we call *the press* a mass medium, we refer, strictly, to an ancient technology (a 'medium') of pressing sheets of paper against inked type – dominant, in 1945, in the ultimate guise of hot metal typesetting machines, which by 1995 were on the scrap-heap. If we call *the popular press* a mass medium, as we might when distinguishing the *Sun* from *The Times*, we refer to circulation numbers (the 'receivers'). The same product, the *Sun*, can thus be described in several different ways as a mass medium.

The same game can be played with radio and TV. We might apply the term 'mass medium' to *the BBC* ('sender'), or *broadcasting* ('medium'), or *News at Ten* ('message'). There is no broadcast equivalent to 'popular press', though the term 'pop radio' was current for a time in the 1970s. Compared with the press and broadcasting, other media have generally been named by reference to fewer elements of the communication process. 'Film' and 'movie' refer to a technology and 'cinema', by connoting a location, to 'receivers'. 'The Internet', 'records', 'CDs' and 'tapes' (audio and video) describe a 'medium'; 'pop' (records, videos) describes a kind of 'message'.

How then can the term 'mass medium' be pinned down for the period 1945–95? Those two words emphasize the key importance of the technology and the 'receivers'. Media qualify as mass media if they are good at conveying complex 'messages' fast, clearly and simultaneously to large numbers of people. The 'senders' and 'messages' are the least distinctive parts. No mass medium can yet serve mass 'senders' on the scale of mass audiences; and the 'messages' delivered in a daily paper could be conveyed in identical terms by typed letter through the mail. The mass audiences and the technology for reaching them are what give the press and electronic media their character as mass media.

Even so, the term is always flexible because it is relative. A 'mass' audience is large in relation to a maximum. New technology changes the maximum. Daily newspapers became increasingly possible on a national, not a London or a regional scale, as railways and faster presses made daily printing and distribution more practical in the late nineteenth century. The *Manchester Guardian* was a mass medium in Manchester from its foundation in 1821. As a mass medium nationally it achieved full status only in 1959 when it started printing in London, dropped Manchester from the mast-head and was distributed nationally like the other Fleet Street dailies. By the mid-1990s, the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* had expanded sales so far beyond their national base that they could fairly be described as international mass media.

'Fast' and 'simultaneous' distribution, again, are defined by the purposes of the 'sender' and the speed of alternative technologies. Until the 1950s, the news in daily papers had only limited competition from radio and virtually none from TV. But soon the big stories were written in the knowledge that readers would know at least the bare bones from a news bulletin, and the 24-hour cycle of the daily paper lost much of its point as a *news* medium. Apart from a few news and sport items and the TV listings, how much of Monday's *Mirror* or *Sun* could not equally well be published on the following Thursday or Friday?

Media qualifying as 'mass media' therefore vary, in particular with changes in technology but also with the changing interest of mass audiences and the intricate factor of costs. Some media at any moment might be on the way in; others on the way out. Theatre, in past centuries, might have counted as a mass medium: it was an effective way of spreading ideas, and so it suffered official censorship (not abolished until the 1960s). Beacons, semaphore, morse code were all in their day rapid methods of sending information.

The elephantine new medium in the 1945–95 period was obviously TV. Its presence in everyday life became so large and so intense, and in such a short space of time – say 20 years from the Coronation in 1953, acknowledged as the 'take-off' date – that its influence is strictly incalculable, over other media and over most facets of life. The effects – upon violence in society for instance – often seemed self-evident. But they were very difficult to prove, or to use as the basis of generalization, because of the difficulty of isolating TV as a causal factor.

Beside TV, other media that came or went look mouselike. Most were variations of existing media. For example, 78 r.p.m records and wind-up gramophones gave way in the 1950s to LPs and open-reel tape-recorders. These in turn gave way to stereo, cassettes, CDs. Bulky portable radios, larger than the portable TV sets of the 1990s and bulbous with valves and batteries, gave way to the transistor radio in the 1950s. Provincial morning papers continued their slow decline, as TV and the national press ate into their market. The 'general interest' illustrated weekly magazines like *Picture Post* were killed off in the late 1950s by TV, even before the free colour magazines and expanded feature coverage of the Sunday papers, led by *The Sunday Times*, were introduced in the early 1960s.

The new electronic media of the 1980s, such as cable, satellite TV and video recorders, were not variations in the product reaching the audience, as were those changes in the press. They were new *methods* of delivering the product: changes in media technology. Some would qualify as mass media on 'message' and rapidity grounds, but fail on audience size. The telephone 'conference call' for instance, enabled a widely separated group of individuals to share a telephone discussion, but the groups were too small to count as 'mass'. Similarly, telex, faxing and e-mail were more analogous to mail than to the press.

'Direct mail' (often known as 'junk mail'), on the other hand, even though it came through the letter-box dressed up as a personal letter and not as a newspaper, arguably met the mass medium definition of reaching large numbers of people quickly and simultaneously. The amount of such mail handled by the Post Office increased threefold from 1975 to 1987, reaching 1,626 million items and making up 7.7 per cent of total national expenditure on advertising. Junk mail can be placed clearly on a continuum with the press. At one end is the newspaper or magazine, delivered by the newsagent and paid for by the reader. Next is the publication paid for by subscription and received through the mail. Next, the 'free sheet', unsolicited and arriving by mail or private delivery. Finally there is the 'letter', free, unsolicited and mailed. Only in size and restricted contents (advertising goods, charities, insurance, unit trusts) does junk mail differ much from the newspaper or magazine as a medium.

Might advertising be regarded as a mass medium on similar grounds? The widest commercial usage of the word 'media' in the post-war period

did indeed refer to just that. 'Senders' (advertising agencies) existed specifically to produce advertisements. They reached mass audiences, whom their 'messages' frequently interested much more than the news or the programmes that the advertisements indirectly helped pay for. There is no distinct technology of advertising, but this could be thought an arbitrary objection, especially when the boundaries between media technologies that were quite sharp in the 1940s – between print, photography, film and TV, for example – were dissolving in the 1990s. Indeed the government's discussion document about regulating cross-ownership raised the possibility in 1995 of using revenue, including advertising, as the standard measure of market share in different media.

Books raise a similar difficulty, for they too have no technology of their own. Unlike advertising, however, they could be excluded from a definition of mass media because by twentieth-century standards they did not spread their messages quickly and simultaneously, nor to audiences that were large in relation to the communities within which they circulated. Then how is the Internet to be classified? Strictly, it is a linked system of computers, through which information has the potential to reach a world-wide audience instantaneously and, for practical purposes, simultaneously. Service providers such as America Online, Compuserve and smaller companies such as Cix, are comparable to news-stands or libraries. Particular sites or 'home pages' on the World Wide Web, a rapidly-growing Internet facility in 1995, are more like individual publications. Newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph*, for example, were already providing Internet versions by then. But compared with a radio or TV channel or a newspaper, the range of content available through the Internet is infinitely greater. Moreover much of its excitement and its anarchic feel come from the fact that the system is interactive. It is easy to open a home page on the Web – to become your own 'publisher'. In addition, you can pick'n'mix from the information provided by news organizations and create *The Daily Me*, as though you took scissors and paste to the newsagent and came home with a paper precisely fitting your interests. This very variety makes the Internet quite unlike the 'top down' media of TV and mass circulation newspapers. It lacks the precision provided by the simultaneous reception of a defined body of information, characteristic of those media. But this is again a matter of relativities, and clearly the Internet has many of the features of a mass medium.

All those are arguable cases. A few other media have met the conditions of technology at various times, but simply failed to catch on with a mass audience. 3-D movies were an early example: cinema audiences in the 1950s donned spectacles that produced a three-dimensional image. Quadraphonic sound sought a comparable multidimensional effect for music-lovers: instead of two speakers and signals from your amplifier, you had four. More fundamental were the videodiscs marketed in competition with videotapes in the early 1980s. These had advantages in handling and in instant access to a desired image without any winding. They were no use for recording programmes, however, and the public opted for video cassette recorders instead.

What may be included in the term 'mass media' is thus not a precisely defined set of products and technologies, but a rather loose and variable collection. Newspapers, magazines, TV and radio feature on most people's lists, with the refinements of the 'new technologies' of the 1980s. Books, discs, CD-Roms and posters feature less. Advertising is a key element in the finance and contents of most media but is not always regarded as a medium in itself.

The history of such a loose collection, even for such a short period as 1945–95, could obviously be a large enterprise. Each element in the communication processes of which media are a part has a history of its own: the media organizations, the changing technology, the contents, the audiences. Then there are the changing relations between each. What difference to the contents of TV programmes followed from the setting up of the ITV companies, for example? Did nudes in the tabloid press proliferate in the 1970s in response to readers' demands, or were readers' expectations aroused by the supply, as a marketing device?

Apart from media's own history, there is the wider question of the relation of media to their society. What needs did they satisfy? Beneath such general terms as 'news' and 'entertainment' lay deeper needs. 'I like to hear the sound of voices in my house' and 'It's like having a good chat' were the kinds of response given to audience surveys of radio and TV in the 1970s. These media were clearly better than the press in helping to combat loneliness and isolation, allegedly more common in the 1970s and 1980s than in the post-war decades, especially among an ageing population.

Such responses help to make the important point that just because mass media were good at spreading news and information, those were

not the only purposes they served. The history of media will look different according to whether you explore their economic and financial character; their links to politics and government and to other possible centres of power; their social aspects, providing certain types of occupation and status and, through their contents, helping to shape their society's culture from one generation to another; or their psychological importance, of the kind indicated in the response to the surveys about TV and radio in the 1970s.

One complicating result of these diverse ways of looking at media is that they can easily seem to have more in common with *non*-media organizations and products than with each other. 'Mass media' can then start to seem an even more incoherent term than has already been suggested. Going to the cinema in the 1940s and 1950s, for example, was an important part of courtship among young people: it had more in common with other courtship rituals than with other forms of media use, such as reading the paper. Similarly, the 1947 Royal Commission on the Press, the first official, across-the-board inquiry into the modern press and the first of three in the 1945–95 period, judged the press by three standards, one of which was as an industry. Yet that was not how most politicians pressing for the inquiry had seen it. They were concerned with variety of opinion, editorial freedom, partisan bias – values having nothing directly to do with economics and industry. Again, the print and production workers who used union power to force overmanning and inflated salaries upon Fleet Street managers in the 1960s and 1970s, put priority on conditions of work and were not dissuaded by arguments that such tactics risked reducing the range of titles and thus of voices heard in the national press. To a typesetter, the closure in 1960 of the last Liberal daily, the *News Chronicle*, might simply mean he must take his typesetting skills elsewhere, and not necessarily to a newspaper. To Liberal party activists, however, it was the extinction of a lamp, the end of an era. In production terms, the morning paper perhaps had more in common with the assembly line than with the production of most TV programmes. In terms of delivery, curiously, it most resembled milk, and in 1995 these two products, uniquely, were still delivered fresh – and perishable – each morning to the doorstep.

If there is a general unifying character to mass media, beyond the relativities of speed and audience size, it may lie in their progressive use, during the second half of the twentieth century, as *leisure* commodities.

They made employment for a workforce and were used in the work of other occupations; but mainly they were used for recreation. In this there is a parallel, by no means fanciful, with the motor car – surely the only product that might challenge TV's claim to have made the greatest difference to most people's daily lives between 1945 and 1995. We did indeed use our cars rather like a TV set. Most of us drove fairly similar models. We spent a lot of time looking through the window at 'pictures'. These, like the routines of a news bulletin, chat show or soap opera, were a mixture of the familiar and the unexpected: townscapes and landscapes, high streets and roundabouts which, even when we repeatedly travelled the same routes, were never 'identical' journeys, never entirely the same experience. We shared our motoring experiences with friends, as we shared our reactions to TV. The motor car was a private space, like the rooms in which we watched TV, shared with family and friends; yet, like TV, it was a window on the world – but taking us out whereas TV brought the world in. Though we each traced individual patterns in our cars, the range of experiences and purposes (shopping, going for a drive, getting to work) gave the 'content' of our journeys much in common.

The analogy must not be overstretched, but the fact that it can be made at all shows how integrated mass media were into the rhythms and activities of society. The amount of time we spent using media, their virtual inescapability and thus the extent of their potential influence, all make their history important. What is there in the nest that this cuckoo did not touch? But their character as well as their scale makes them important. For not only are the press, radio and TV, in particular, a key part of the organism of a society that endlessly recreates itself: they are also the chief means through which a society observes and evaluates itself. This is obvious in politics. TV became both an arena in which political discussion is carried on, like the House of Commons or a party meeting, and simultaneously a medium in which politicians could be held to account before the people.

This dual character makes mass media almost inevitably contentious. In observing society and providing the means of its evaluation, media tend to change what they observe – to exert influence, unwittingly or by intent. Sport provides clear examples. Cricket in 1995 was a somewhat different game from 1945, due to the 'needs' of TV, and Rugby was becoming so. The finances and popularity of some sports, such as snooker, darts, tennis and athletics, were transformed by that medium.

But not everybody preferred one-day cricket: in sport, as in other social activities, the effects of media were controversial.

When media themselves are put to scrutiny they are therefore judged both on their own performance and also on their relations with the rest of society. For this reason, most questions about the importance of media turn out to be questions about something else: the interest in media will typically be in its possible role as a *cause* of some particular effect. Do media cause violence? Here the wider concern is the increased violence in society at large. Has the press been persistently biased against Labour since 1945? Here the question is prompted by an interest in the competition for political power. Is *Lady Chatterley's Lover* obscene? The concern of the prosecution in 1960 was with the corruption of public morals.

This book does not go into such broader questions. Many are discussed exhaustively in the literature on 'effects' or 'bias', for example (see Bibliography). This is a history of the media, rather than of their times. Firstly, the book is limited to those media which most absorbed people's attention in the post-war era, and which met most fully the criteria of a mass medium – television, radio and newspapers. Other media are mentioned only in relation to these. Chapters 3 to 6 analyse what was available and what people used – the numbers and circulation of the press, the expansion of TV and radio channels, the patterns of ownership and audiences.

Seen in those terms, three main features of the period were media concentration, conglomeration and internationalization. Concentration of ownership increased both within particular media, from national daily papers to local radio, and between them. Conglomeration meant that media companies diversified or were bought up by larger corporations whose media interests were only a part of their whole activity. These often worked on an international scale, and the results showed in their products. For instance, co-production TV series were scripted and cast to appeal to an international audience. Publishers calculated their advances for best-selling authors like Frederick Forsyth on the basis of sales hyped in international markets. Readers of Rupert Murdoch's papers in different continents might read the same syndicated articles.

Those features were not new. The model British press baron, Lord Northcliffe, 'bestrode Fleet Street like a colossus' before the First World War, fat with national and provincial daily and Sunday papers, maga-

zines and children's comics. Films were cast for an international market in the Hollywood of the 1920s; and international press syndication had a long history. Nor did the post-war trends happen at the same rate in every medium. Far more than before, however, and far more substantially because of the growth of TV and other new media, they stand out as dominant features.

The book's later chapters focus mainly upon aspects of media accountability. In 1945 the public arguments were still largely about the nature of a 'free press'. Broadcasters and politicians largely left each other alone. In 1995 the free press argument had become over-shadowed by debate about TV. For the citizen/viewer/elector, TV could be the sling of David against the Goliath of government. Or it might be the weapon of Goliath himself, used by governments in the exercise of power. The 1980s ended not only with disputes about the unprecedented governmental curb on broadcasts by Irish extremists (lifted only at the end of 1994), but with a reconstruction of the broadcasting system that put in question the very principles of traditional 'public service broadcasting' and facilitated TV empire-building. The more media permeated life from 1945 to 1995 and the more they became concentrated in international conglomerates, the more important the accountability of media themselves became.

3 Media 1945–1995: the Press

The general pattern

National daily and Sunday papers came to dominate British newspaper reading more recently than might be thought. In 1920, the circulation of the provincial morning and evening papers was still one-third greater than the national dailies. But the nationals quickly expanded: they overtook the provincials in 1923 and by 1945 sold almost twice as many copies.

Wars make us hungry for news. Despite newsprint rationing, fewer pages without any reduction in price, and pegged circulations, sales rose during the war. They continued to do so among all kinds of paper until about the early 1950s (table 3.1). Newsprint restrictions lasted until 1955, initially because of the post-war dollar crisis and the Korean War – both of which hit imports. Most papers did not mind, however, for the government restrictions kept their paper and printing costs low and enabled them to make good profits from the big demand for advertising space.

1957 was the peak year for total national sales, before the competition from ITV for advertising revenue had started to bite. The next 35 years saw a drop of one-third, very unevenly distributed and with many fluctuations. The traditional London evening paper market virtually disappeared. In 1920 there had been six London evenings. Post-war there were still three, but *The Star* closed in 1960 and by 1989 an amalgamated *Evening News* and *Evening Standard* survived alone, with a reduced circulation area and no Saturday edition.

Table 3.1 Newspaper circulations

Year	*National morning*[a] *(m)*	*National Sunday*[b] *(m)*	*Provincial morning (m)*	*Provincial evening (m)*	*Provincial Sunday*[c] *(m)*	*London Evening (m)*	*Weekly & bi-weekly*[e] *(m)*
1939	10.53	15.48	2.16	4.99	.48[d]	1.71	8.56[d]
1945	12.35	19.76	2.38	5.39	?	2.38	7.37
1947	15.63	26.60	2.87	6.41	1.66	3.48	11.30
1949	16.45	29.32	3.03	6.79	?	3.80	13.32
1951	16.62	30.59	2.94	6.84	1.00	3.75	13.69
1953	16.07	30.20	2.80	7.13	1.07	3.29	13.68
1955	16.22	30.22	2.35	7.06	1.14	2.98	16.21
1957	16.71	29.08	2.30	6.85	1.16	2.85	16.03
1959	16.11	26.84	2.56	6.39	1.05	2.51	16.79
1961	15.69	23.33	1.89	6.61	2.09	2.25	14.73
1963	15.55	23.51	2.05	6.24	2.80	2.12	13.94
1965	15.59	23.98	2.01	5.72	1.20	1.96	13.58
1967	15.41	24.27	2.06	6.65	2.36	1.91	13.25
1969	14.80	24.37	1.97	6.89	2.02	1.68	14.42
1971	14.24	22.74	1.95	6.68	2.55	1.49	13.17
1973	14.55	22.10	2.03	6.60	2.30	1.33	12.73
1975	14.11	20.50	2.09	6.51	1.34	1.13	12.28
1977	13.95	18.95	2.00	6.17	1.28	.96	11.78
1979	15.19	19.26	2.11	5.96	2.26	.81	12.21
1981	15.39	17.82	2.03	5.64	2.31	.57	11.50
1983	14.95	18.13	2.00	5.25	2.24	.48	10.17
1985	14.73	17.83	2.03	5.22	2.73	.49	9.02
1987	14.92	18.10	1.98	5.07	2.66	.49	7.68
1989	14.55	17.50	1.99	5.10	2.60	.47	7.4
1991	13.56	16.46	1.94	4.83	2.55	.50	6.7
1993	13.23	15.77	1.91	4.54	2.57	.47	7.0
1994	13.58	15.84	1.88	4.50	2.54	.45	7.4

[a] Excluding *Daily Worker/Morning Star* and *Daily Record.*
[b] Including *Empire News.*
[c] Figures fluctuate, as some circulations were confidential.
[d] 1937 figure.
[e] Excluding free papers.
Sources: Royal Commissions on the Press, Press Council, ABC, Belson (1967), Newspaper Society.

The provincial evening papers suffered a steady decline, steepest in the later years. The biggest drop was among the Sundays – nearly half their sales, a massive 15 million – and the weeklies. The provincial mornings dropped by one-third from their postwar peak but steadied

from 1960 until a slump at the end of the 1980s. The national dailies peaked later, in 1957, but fluctuated within a comparatively narrow range. Apart from fairly intangible external factors like changes in the cost of living or unemployment, the fluctuations were caused by the immediate effects of newspaper closures (the *News Chronicle* and *The Star* in 1960, for example), by price increases, and by changes such as 'tabloidization', colour printing and the launch of weekend magazines, and by promotional gimmicks like bingo.

The survival of the nationals may seem remarkable, in view of the much greater choice of alternative media at the end of the period than at the beginning, with TV and video an obvious competitor for the reader's time and the advertiser's money. Other kinds of attraction altogether – sport, motoring, holidays – consumed time and money too. This survival reflects the extent to which the daily papers' contents and appeal tied in with these various alternatives: they were complementary more than competitive. When regular radio broadcasting began in 1922, the press refused at first to publish free the daily programme schedules. It took the London store magnate Gordon Selfridge, who included them in his own advertising copy in the evening papers, to show that publishing them would increase the value of the paper to its readers, rather than make them desert to a rival medium. Similarly, in the post-war period, the national dailies managed to adapt their appeal so that people continued to find them useful, and advertisers therefore went on providing the essential economic base for most of them. The *Guardian*'s weekly *Online* supplement, started in May 1994, was in the same tradition.

What made a paper 'national'?

The categories of the previous section need breaking down. What made a paper 'national'? The term was purely conventional – and vague. A London base and nationwide circulation were generally essential, but there were exceptions. The *Guardian*, for example, had a national reputation without a London base and with a limited circulation (its home was in Manchester up until 1959). Similarly, in 1978, the *Daily Star* was successfully launched as a national tabloid from Manchester.

'Nationwide circulation' was also something of a fiction. The expansion of the London dailies by Northcliffe and his imitators, including

Lord Beaverbrook and the Berry brothers (Lords Kemsley and Camrose) was made possible partly by printing separate northern editions. In 1947 all the London dailies except *The Times, Daily Mirror* and *Daily Worker* printed large editions in Manchester, and the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* also printed in Scotland (until 1966 and 1974 respectively). Much of the domestic news was different in these from the London editions.

The nationals did not cover the country evenly either, and their contents had distinct biases. Northern Ireland was largely excluded, both from circulation and, until the renewed troubles after 1969, from coverage. Scotland had papers like the *The Scotsman* and *Glasgow Herald* that were too Scottish to be 'national' yet were of a quality that depressed the Scottish sales of papers such as *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. The *Daily Mirror* did not even pretend that its Scottish edition was the same paper and sold it as the *Daily Record*. In England, the north-east region was the last to be penetrated fully by the London papers, with Newcastle and Darlington remaining important newspaper cities into the 1980s. As to contents, the Royal Commission on the Press in 1947 judged that the nationals 'tended to reflect the life and interests of three or four regions rather than those of the whole country' (p. 8).

Content contributed to the woolly definition in an extra way. Was the *Financial Times* a national daily? The 1947 Press Commission thought not: its contents were too specialized (no sport, for instance). The 1961 Press Commission thought differently, however, for by then the paper had broadened its range and increased its penetration. Again, the *Morning Star* (*Daily Worker* until 1966) was 'specialist' in the sense that its columns reflected strongly its brand of Marxist ideology and the work of the Communist party and parts of the Labour movement. Its circulation (and perhaps its party's sizeable electoral support) qualified it unquestionably as a national daily in 1947. By 1961 it was fading: lack of resources kept it to four or six pages when other broadsheets were three or four times as big. By 1974, the third Press Commission excluded it from its tables and statistics. The Press Council, on the other hand, continued to count it as a national daily. Finally, two very small, short-lived papers defined themselves as 'nationals' in 1953 and 1960. These, the *Recorder* and the *New Daily*, were idiosyncratic, right wing, anti-trade union papers. They would have had more chance of getting established in the late 1980s.

One factor which by itself had no bearing on the idea of a 'national' paper was circulation size. In 1947 several provincial papers still had circulations rivalling some of Fleet Street's: the Manchester *Daily Despatch* (475,000) and *Evening News* (224,000), the *Newcastle Journal* (146,000), *Yorkshire Evening Post* (204,000) and *Birmingham Mail* (200,000). *The Times*, at this point, sold 195,000 and *The Daily Telegraph* and tabloid *Daily Graphic* were both under 900,000. The best example was a Sunday paper, the Manchester *Empire News*. This had a circulation approaching two million at the end of the war, ranking it ahead of six out of ten national Sundays. It was edited in Manchester and was founded as a sporting paper – the *Umpire* – but the 1947 Press Commission called it 'distinguishable from a national newspaper only in its place of origin' (p. 13). Moreover it printed in London as well as Manchester for most of the post-war years until its closure in 1960.

The London evening papers complicated the picture as well. Their position in the capital meant that insofar as London's affairs were the nation's, they had national contents and a national voice. They were close to Westminster politics, to City interests, and to national and international gossip about the arts, show business and 'society'. People in those worlds probably treated them rather like national papers, too. Each was owned, moreover, by one of the national dailies – the *Evening News* by the *Daily Mail*, the *Evening Standard* by the *Daily Express* and the *Star* by the *News Chronicle*. But of course they did not circulate beyond the commuter belt, so they failed to qualify as nationals on that ground.

The recipe for a national paper was thus a mixture of national reputation, geographical reach and breadth of content. The precise ingredients changed across the years after 1945, as they had before. Before the first World War, a London-based metropolitan press had co-existed with a vigorous provincial press, whose luminaries (*Yorkshire Post, Manchester Guardian, Scotsman*, and so on) were not completely overshadowed by the London papers in either circulation or editorial authority. The *Manchester Guardian* in the late 1950s was the last survivor of that era. The removal of its editorial offices to London and of 'Manchester' from its mast-head symbolized the change to a dominant national press with the provincials dwarfed in circulation and resources.

The national press

Numbers

Changes in the number of national dailies from 1945 to 1995 were very few and took three forms: launch or closure, relaunch, and change of status. The *Guardian* and *Financial Times* joined the list, and arguably the *Morning Star* left it, by change of status. The *Sun*, top seller by 1980, was a tabloid relaunch, ten years previously, of an ailing broadsheet paper with an entirely different character, some of whose readers nevertheless stayed with it and were a base on which the new ownership could build.

Because of abundant advertising revenue and continued newsprint restrictions (which limited competition) the first closure – the *News Chronicle* – did not come till 1960. The way it was done, with absolutely no warning, was traumatic for the staff and startling for its subscribers, of whom there were well over a million. Moreover it was the last mass circulation Liberal daily and was closed by abrupt merger with the *Daily Mail* – a Conservative paper. On 18 October, *News Chronicle* readers were simply delivered a copy of the *Mail*, with *News Chronicle* in small type on the mast-head. The shock was increased for Londoners by the simultaneous merger of *The Star* with the *Evening News*.

Despite gloomy predictions over the next 20 years, including forecasts that only one 'quality' daily would survive, with one middle-range paper (the *Express*, for example) and one tabloid, only two other established papers died. In 1971 Lord Rothermere merged the tabloid *Daily Sketch* with his *Daily Mail*. The *Sketch*, in comparison with the *Daily Mirror*, was thin in size and content and Conservative in politics. The new *Sun* was clearly going to provide a Conservative voice for the tabloid market and would eat further into its declining sales, so the *Sketch* died a quiet and unsurprising death.

The death of the old *Daily Herald*, the longest surviving Labour daily, founded in 1912 and owned by the Labour party for a period between the wars, was more agony than sudden trauma when compared with the demise of the *News Chronicle*, but equally disturbing for its supporters. The paper had an ageing readership and a bad position in the advertising market, because of its working class skew. Its owners, especially when the *Daily Mirror* took over, were reluctant to make the contents brighter,

less political, less class-conscious. That might have attracted more women and young readers – but by taking them partly from the *Mirror*. Instead, Cecil King, who had pledged the TUC he would keep the paper alive till the end of the decade (providing its obvious description as King's cross), tried to take it up market and appeal to the younger voters, better off but 'socially radical', whose support had just helped elect Harold Wilson into office. The paper was relaunched in a new format as the *Sun*, but it failed to win up-market readers, while the old loyalists were put off. It struggled on as an 'underfinanced, deradicalized hybrid', in Curran and Seaton's phrase (1991, p. 110), until King's pledge expired and it was sold to Rupert Murdoch in 1969.

The only other closure in the period (leaving aside the *Recorder* and *New Daily*) was *The Post*. This was a tabloid launched by the founder of *Today*, Eddie Shah, which lasted only 33 issues at the end of 1988.

The enormous risks and start-up costs of launching a new daily from scratch prevented anyone trying, until new technology and a successful challenge to the strength of the trade unions transformed Fleet Street economics in the mid-1980s – making 'Fleet Street' itself an archaic term, since the construction of production plant elsewhere, notably Wapping, was part of the process. The one exception was the *Daily Star*, founded in 1978 by the owner of the *Daily Express*, Trafalgar House. The object was to use spare printing capacity in Manchester to compete with the London-based *Sun*, which the *Star* was therefore designed to resemble extremely closely. Sales varied but were well down by the end of the 1980s, and the paper remained a rather marginal venture.

The 'Wapping revolution' was truly a transformation – of newspaper technology, industrial relations and costs. Forces that had kept the size of Fleet Street under continuous pressure for more than 25 years were broken. Newspaper production was labour-intensive. Although newsprint (the other major cost) had doubled during 1972–5, the Press Commission of the mid-1970s found labour was still the largest cost, at 40–50 per cent. This was partly due to the nature of the business, but partly because management bought off the threat of trouble with high wage settlements in the prosperous 1950s. The industry was 'notorious for the generosity of its manning levels, and its workers have traditionally been very highly paid', commented the Press Commission (1977, p. 42).

The production unions' success had various causes, including an effective closed shop and weak newspaper managements. The strike

threat was formidable: there is no way lost production on a newspaper can ever be made up. The new technology available in the 1970s offered the promise of massively reduced manning levels and higher productivity. In effect, through computer-typesetting, journalists could become their own printers, and whole echelons of intermediaries could be eliminated.

For years unions and managements argued over the terms of change. The Mirror Group, for one, invested heavily in plant that stood idle. *The Times* and *Sunday Times* closed down in dispute, for what turned out to be a whole year.

The unions overplayed their hand in the end. Eddie Shah, who had built up a group of free weeklies based in Stockport, determined to launch a national daily, *Today*. His weeklies were produced by new technology in defiance of union opposition, and he planned the same methods for *Today*. One advantage of computerized typesetting was the speed with which it could be learned. Rupert Murdoch decided to do the same thing with *The Times*. When the unions took industrial action against a no-strike clause in the latest contract proposals, Murdoch moved production of his papers overnight to the plant at Wapping – previously said to be for the *News of the World* alone. This was a classic *fait accompli*. Non-print union labour was bused in; 'Fortress Wapping' was the scene of picketing, boycott, physical attacks, confrontations with (some said by) the police. Crucial to Shah's and Murdoch's success was the Thatcher government's industrial relations legislation that limited the unions' power to respond.

Murdoch's success was the cue for the rest of Fleet Street to forge ahead with new investment (sometimes long planned) in buildings and plant. Workforces were slashed: the Express group, for example, cut one-third of its 6,000 staff. The flurry involved further new launches. *Today* was followed by the *Independent*, *The Post*, and a number of Sunday and London evening papers, of which only the *Sunday Sport* survived. A year or two later, in 1989, came a new *Sunday Correspondent*, closely followed by the *Independent on Sunday* and aiming at the same market. Both could not be expected to flourish, as the eighties boom came to an end, and the *Correspondent* closed after a year. But there had been nothing like these initiatives since the heyday of Northcliffe early in the century.

One result was an increasingly intense circulation war. Each sector of the market was arguably now over-supplied, notwithstanding lower

production costs. When recession hit, papers made drastic economies. Then in the summer of 1993 Rupert Murdoch started an aggressive price war, cutting the *Times* from 45p to 30p on weekdays and the *Sun* from 25p to 20p. This destabilized prices throughout the national press in a way unprecedented since 1945. It led to short-run sales fluctuations and pricing manoeuvres, as the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Independent* and the *Daily Mirror* in particular sought effective counter-strategies. All, however, managed to survive, despite losses at the Telegraph papers, for example, of £1 million a month in the latter part of 1994.

The attempt to launch new London evening papers in the 1980s reflected an enduring belief that the capital ought to be able to support more than one. Since 1980 the *Standard* had been the only survivor of the flourishing trio in 1945. These had peaked in 1950 with combined sales of 3.8 million but had gone steadily downhill thereafter. When it closed in 1960, *The Star* was roughly half its 1950 size. Its closure provided only a breathing space. In 1974 the *Standard* dropped its Saturday edition and the *Evening News* went tabloid. When the two amalgamated in 1980, they had a joint circulation of little more than 600,000.

The 1974 Press Commission suggested the evenings' decline was due to their rapid increase in price in the early 1970s, the effects of TV, changing family budgets in a time of inflation, and the growth of evening papers in commuter towns. Around 27 per cent of adults in Brighton, for instance, saw a London evening paper in 1963, but only 7 per cent did in 1975.

With the much lower production costs of the late 1980s, small circulation was no longer the same barrier to profitability. Robert Maxwell launched the *London Daily News* as a 'round the clock' paper in February 1987. It lasted five months. Partly it died, no doubt, from its own defects (including distribution difficulties), and partly from the spirited response of the *Standard*. But Lord Rothermere, sole owner of the *Standard*, spoilt the market too by relaunching the old *Evening News* on the very same day. He closed it a few months after Maxwell's paper folded – with a circulation of only about 100,000.

Until Wapping, the number of national Sundays contracted quite severely, compared with the dailies. The economics of Sunday journalism were different, being much affected by what happened to the staff and printing plant during the rest of the week. Thus, two new launches

had proved possible at a time when new dailies were generally still unpractical. Both were sister papers of established dailies, the *Telegraph* and *Mail*, which could be expected to provide a core of readers and whose presses had spare capacity. The *Sunday Telegraph* (February 1961) cashed in on the rapidly expanding quality Sunday market, built up most effectively by the *Sunday Times* (whose colour magazine started in the same year). The *Mail on Sunday* (summer 1982) had more difficulty, since it aimed chiefly to take readers from the less buoyant middle market long dominated by the now declining *Sunday Express*.

Unlike the dailies, the number of titles was not swelled by relaunches and changes of status: all other changes were closures. First went the *Sunday Chronicle*, a failing product faced with stronger middle market competitors and pressure on each side from the quality papers and the downmarket tabloids. Its owner, Lord Kemsley, leased the presses instead to the *Sunday Pictorial* (renamed *Sunday Mirror* in 1963). At the end of 1960, in the same period that the *News Chronicle* and London evening *Star* closed, the *Sunday Graphic* and the *Empire News* were closed by new owners, the Thomson organization. Thomson, again, could make more money by leasing the presses to another newspaper – in this case the *News of the World*. It was this subordination of the social and political value of a newspaper to commercial priorities that so exercised politicians and helped get the second and third Royal Commissions on the Press set up in 1961 and 1974.

In June 1961 the *Sunday Dispatch*, another middle-ground paper squeezed into unprofitability by competition for sales and advertising revenue, was sold by Lord Rothermere and amalgamated with the *Sunday Express*. The previous 12 months had therefore seen unprecedented contraction of plague-like proportions. Five important papers had died (three Sundays, one daily and one London evening), with a total circulation of six million. Most of the readers, of course, moved to other papers.

One other Sunday paper died in the 1960s, after struggling on with subsidies from the Cooperative movement. This was the *Sunday Citizen*, relict of one of the popular Victorian papers, *Reynolds' News*, relaunched with a new name in a tabloid format in 1962.

The Sunday innovations of the late 1980s have already been mentioned. *Sunday Today* started alongside *Today* but made no mark. *Sunday Sport* thrived on its advertising but was a cheaply produced

magazine more than a newspaper. *News on Sunday* was an earnest attempt in 1987 to establish a popular radical paper, backed by trade unions and Labour controlled local authorities. Its planning and management were reportedly rent with the schisms for which the left is sometimes ridiculed. Its circulation never approached the 800,000 target and was about 112,000 when, after little more than six months, the estate agent and local radio entrepreneur, Owen Oyston, who sought to rescue it, closed it down.

'Qualities' and 'populars'

Trends in each paper's circulation are clear in tables 3.2 and 3.3. Changes were the result of many factors. Some were general, like the good economic conditions (for the press) in the late 1940s and 1950s and the bad ones in the 1960s. Others concerned specific papers – their comparative attractiveness to advertisers; the age, wealth and education of their readers; their special style and contents. Many of the last were intangible. Discovering how to reverse a declining circulation was famously difficult and, as the figures show, was not often achieved. Great success, such as that of the *Daily Express* at its peak (around 1960), might contain the seeds of decline. Both the *Express* and the *Mail* went into the 1970s with an ageing readership, for they failed to replace their old readers with young new ones in the same numbers. Yet if they changed their style, they risked making things worse by alienating the old readers and still failing to attract new ones.

The great circulation successes were the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* into the 1960s; the *Sun* from 1970 onwords, when it bit hard into the *Mirror's* market; *The Daily Telegraph* until the 1980s and the *Guardian*, in a quiet way, after it had settled in London. The *Express* and *Mirror* successes were repeated by their Sunday companions. Nearly all the Sundays fell back more or less steeply later in the period, however. Of all Sunday papers the most distinctive success was *The Sunday Times*, which soared ahead from the late 1950s on a formula of serialized war memoirs and increasingly diversified and segmented review and magazine sections.

Rather than trace individual papers in detail, it is more useful to look at the development of particular classes of paper. One of Northcliffe's

many effects upon the press was to sharpen the division, comparatively minor in the late nineteenth century, between the mass circulation 'popular' papers and the low circulation 'qualities'. Northcliffe founded the *Daily Mail* in 1896 and pushed its circulation to one million in 1900. This was unprecedented for a daily paper: most were selling in the range 90–250,000. In the 1930s, circulation wars pushed the figures far higher, aided by a big increase in daily paper purchases among the working class.

The popular press needed the sales revenue from large circulations to cover their costs. Advertising revenue would certainly help, or would boost profits, but much of it went simply on the paper and production costs of printing the advertisements. The quality papers ran on different lines. The sales revenue from their smaller circulations covered a much lower proportion of costs; but the greater purchasing power of their readers, some of whom spent 'corporate' money, not just their own personal incomes, enabled the qualities to charge far higher advertising rates and break even at circulation levels completely unrealistic for the populars.

The quality–popular distinction was sharply drawn by 1945. Thereafter it was complicated by the immense success of the *Daily Mirror*, which had been turned into Britain's first mass market tabloid in 1935. Both dailies and Sundays can thus be sorted into 'quality', 'middle market' or 'popular broadsheet', and 'mass market' or 'popular tabloid' groups. The differences roughly corresponded both to the nature of the contents and design (including length of articles and size of headlines) and to the social class distribution of their readers.

Table 3.2 shows how the groups changed. The advance of the qualities was dramatic – sales in 1994 were two and a half times those of 1945, with five quality dailies instead of two. The number of populars (excluding the *Daily Worker/Morning Star*, which fitted easily into neither category) was six in each year, but total circulation was much the same – and down by 20 per cent on 1955. Despite the great increases in formal education since 1945, still fewer than one person in five was interested in the kind of reading matter offered by the qualities in 1994.

For the mass of the population, indeed, the shift of interest arguably went in the other direction. In 1945 most people read a broadsheet paper – four populars and the two qualities, compared with two tabloids. The broadsheet populars comprised a middle market – middle class and middle brow – which became steadily less distinguishable over the

Table 3.2 National daily newspapers: circulation (thousands)

Newspaper (launch date)	*1945*	*1950*	*1955*	*1960*	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*	*1985*	*1990*	*1994*
'Qualities'											
Daily Telegraph (1855)	822	976	1,055	1,200[a]	1,337	1,409	1,331	1,433	1,202	1,076	1,041
The Times (1785)	195	254	222	260	254	388	319	316	478	420	545
Financial Times (1888)	(35)	(57)	(80)	122	146	170	181	196	234	290	292[b]
(Manchester) Guardian (1821)	(80)	(140)	(156)	212	270	304	319	379	487	424	401
The Independent (1986)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	411	281
Total	1,017	1,230	1,277	1,794	2,007	2,271	2,150	2,324	2,401	2,621	2,560
(%)	(8)	(7)	(8)	(11)	(13)	(15)	(15)	(16)	(16)	(18)	(19)
(including *Financial Times* and *Manchester Guardian*)	(1,132)	(1,427)	(1,513)								
'Middle market'											
Daily Express (1900)	3,239	4,116	4,036	4,270	3,987	3,563	2,822	2,194[c]	1,902	1,585	1,338
Daily Mail (1896)	1,752	2,225	2,068	2,825	2,464	1,890	1,726[d]	1,948	1,815	1,708	1,774
Daily Herald/Sun (1912)	2,000	2,017	1,759	1,418	1,273	–	–	–	–	–	–
News Chronicle (1930)	1,454	1,534	1,253	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Today (1986)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	540	597
Total	8,445	9,046	9,116	8,513	7,724	5,453	4,548	4,142	3,717	3,833	3,709
(%)	(68)	(60)	(57)	(53)	(49)	(37)	(32)	(28)	(25)	(27)	(27)

Mass market tabloids											
Daily Mirror (1903)	2,000	4,567	4,725	4,649	5,019	4,570	3,968	3,625	3,033	3,083	2,494
Daily Sketch/Graphic (1908)	883	717	950	1,075	844	785	–	–	–	–	–
Sun (1970)	–	–	–	–	–	1,615	3,446	3,741	4,125	3,855	4,078
Daily Star (1978)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1,034	1,455	833	744
(*The Post* [1988])[e]	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	2,883	5,344	5,675	5,724	5,863	6,970	7,414	8,400	8,613	7,771	7,316
(%)	(23)	(32)	(35)	(37)	(38)	(47)	(53)	(56)	(58)	(55)	(54)
Daily Worker/Morning Star (1930)[g]	115	115	?[f]	60	?[f]	?[f]	?[f]	33	?[f]	?[f]	?
Total	12,345	16,520	16,068	16,031	15,594	14,694	14,112	14,886	14,731	14,225	13,585
(including Daily Worker)	(12,460)	(16,717)	(16,304)								

[a] Estimate.
[b] About 125,000 of this number were overseas sales.
[c] Tabloid since 1977.
[d] Tabloid since 1971.
[e] *The Post* lasted one month.
[f] figure not certain: possibly 6,000–7,000 copies per day.
[g] Circulations only available intermittently.
Guardian and *Financial Times* not counted as national dailies until 1960. *Daily Mirror* excludes Scottish *Daily Record*.
Sources: Audit Bureau of Circulations, Press Council Annual Reports; individual newspapers. Some figures are part-year averages.

Table 3.3 National Sunday newspapers: circulation (thousands)

Newspaper (launch date)	*1945*	*1950*	*1955*	*1960*	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*	*1985*	*1990*	*1994*
'Qualities'											
Independent on Sunday (1990)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	352	324
Observer (1791)	299	422	564	738	824	830	730	929	736	551	493
(*Sunday Correspondent* [1989–90])	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	197	–
Sunday Times (1822)	460	535	606	1,001	1,290	1,439	1,380	1,419	1,251	1,165	1,236
Sunday Telegraph (1961)	–	–	–	–	650	764	752	1,003	686	594	650
Total	759	957	1,170	1,739	2,764	3,033	2,862	3,351	2,673	2,859	2,703
(%)	(4)	(3)	(4)	(6)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(18)	(15)	(16)	(17)
'Middle market'											
Reynolds' News/Sunday Citizen (1850)	580	705	579	329	233	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sunday Chronicle (1885)	1,150	1,118	830	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sunday Dispatch (1801)	1,372	2,378	2,549	1,520	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sunday Express (1918)	2,114	2,967	3,235	3,706	4,190	4,263	3,715	2,989	2,449	1,664	1,511
Mail on Sunday (1982)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1,631	1,903	1,959
(*News on Sunday* (1987))	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(*Sunday Today* [1986–7]	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	5,216	7,168	7,193	5,555	4,423	4,263	3,715	2,989	4,080	3,567	3,470
(%)	(26)	(24)	(24)	(20)	(18)	(18)	(16)	(23)	(22)	(21)	(22)

'Mass market'											
Empire News (1884)	1,812	2,085	2,049	2,100	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
News of the World (1843)	5,000	8,444	7,971	6,664	6,176	6,229	5,479	4,198	5,103	5,056	4,791
People/Sunday People (1881)	3,447	5,089	5,075	5,468	5,538	5,140	4,188	3,846	2,962	2,566	2,029
Sunday Graphic (1915)	1,026	1,169	1,220	893	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sunday Pictorial/Mirror (1915)	2,500	5,094	5,539	5,461	5,082	4,826	4,251	3,831	3,009	2,894	2,562
Sunday Sport (1986)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	402	290
Total	13,785	21,881	21,854	20,586	16,796	16,195	13,918	11,875	11,074	10,918	9,672
(%)	(70)	(73)	(72)	(74)	(70)	(69)	(68)	(65)	(62)	(63)	(61)
Total	19,760	30,006	30,217	27,880	23,983	23,491	20,495	18,215	17,827	17,344	15,845

News on Sunday and *Sunday Today* lasted only for a short time, with circulations of 100–200,000. The *Sunday Correspondent* is included in 1990 but ceased publication on Nov. 27. The figure shown is its final sales. It began publication on Sept. 17 1989.

Sources: Audit Bureau of Circulations; Press Council Annual Reports.

Table 3.4 Date of adopting tabloid format by national newspapers

Before 1945	*Daily Mirror* (1935)
	Daily Sketch (1908)
	Sunday Pictorial/Sunday Mirror (1915)
1962	*Sunday Citizen*
1969	*Sun*
1971	*Daily Mail*
1974	*Sunday People* (*The People* from 1986)
1977	*Daily Express*
1978	*Daily Star* (at launch)
1982	*Mail on Sunday* (at launch)
1984	*News of the World*
1986	*Today* (at launch)
	Sunday Today (at launch; closed 1987)
	Sunday Sport (at launch)
1987	*News on Sunday* (at launch; closed 1987)
1988	*The Post* (at launch; closed 1988)
1992	*Sunday Express*

following decade. In 1945 the *Mail, Express, News Chronicle* and *Herald* dominated the number of titles and the sales of the qualities and tabloids either side of them. Fifty years on, the *Mail* and *Express* remained, with the new *Today*, but found themselves squeezed between sectors that had doubled in size.

In the Sunday market the quality – popular division became even sharper than among the dailies when the qualities turned themselves into large scale Sunday magazines. The popular broadsheet category eventually disappeared, however, as one by one the popular broadsheets changed their format to tabloid (see table 3.4).

Ownership

What kind of people owned the national press? Many seemed larger than life. The image of the 'press baron' partly reflects literal reality: politicians continually courted publishers with peerages to secure or reward their support, in case the intangible 'power of the press' turned out to be real. But the image also suggests character. The 'barons' were often supreme egotists: flamboyant, assertive, idiosyncratic, ostentatious, ruthless – yet inspiring great loyalty and affection. A newspaper suits

such behaviour. It involves the daily expression of opinion and its smallest details can be changed by the direct intervention of the proprietor. By comparison, other mass production barons of the mid-twentieth century – motor manufacturers such as Lord Nuffield, for instance – could not so quickly, easily and frequently shape their products. The newspaper is a natural tool for the autocrat.

Barons could most readily huff and stomp when they did indeed own their papers, rather than being chairmen, liable to be sacked by their directors. Cecil King behaved liked a baron at the *Daily Mirror* in the 1960s, scolding the Wilson government and toying with the idea of political office. Readers may have thought his front page squibs came from the pen of a dominant shareholder. Not at all: King went too far and was out on his ear in an overnight boardroom coup in 1968. Northcliffe, Beaverbrook, Kemsley or Thomson, on the other hand, could not easily be jettisoned: their press empires were more substantially *theirs*. All, in fact, were self-made men – which no doubt is a clue to their style and motives. There is more than a touch of rags to riches in the story of the outsize barons. Despite great wealth, too, the barons were not generally profit-maximizers. If they had just wanted to make money, there were far better ways. By the late 1960s, indeed, half of Fleet Street was running at a loss (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1966), and the situation (though cyclical) got no better in the 1970s. Titles were often kept going on the profits of provincial partners or other businesses.

With his own property, it was perhaps easier too for a baron to take risks or sail close to the wind. Tiny Rowland (latterly owning the *Observer*) was dubbed the unacceptable face of capitalism by Prime Minister Heath in the early 1970s. Robert Maxwell was once declared unfit to be in charge of a major public company by an official inquiry; and if his later frauds had been discovered in his lifetime, he would no doubt have been prosecuted. It needed considerable force of character, whatever the merits of the issue, for the Thomson family to shut down *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* for a year and for Murdoch to move the papers to 'fortress Wapping' later, in his struggles with the unions.

Some owners, of course, inherited papers – and their fathers' flair or good fortune. Rupert Murdoch's father built an empire in Australia: his son did so on a world scale. Lord Hartwell inherited *The Daily Telegraph*, saw it flourish and launched its Sunday partner. Vere Harmsworth proved a shrewd strategist at Associated Newspapers in the

1980s. Other heirs had less flair, luck or stomach. Beaverbrook's Express group did not prosper under his son Max Aitken, who sold out some ten years after Beaverbrook's death. Nor did Colonel John Astor's *Times* under his son Gavin.

Inheritors needed a motive for getting out. The motives of those getting in could be as varied as the role of a newspaper. Some saw the press as an industry and had no other object than to sell a product, provide employment and make a fair profit. Lord Thomson was the best example in the post-war period. He was all the more striking because the boast that he ran his papers just to make money contrasted strongly with the more complex motives, combining profit with politics, that were still typical of the proprietors of the early 1960s. The boast went bluntly against the claim by Thomson's fellow Canadian, Beaverbrook, that his own objective was purely propaganda. Forerunners to the Thomson view included nineteenth-century printers, such as the early owners of *The Daily Telegraph*, who took over papers in settlement of unpaid printing bills. Lord Southwood of Odhams Press acquired his 51 per cent shareholding in the *Daily Herald* between the wars on much the same basis. Southwood was not much interested in the tactics of the Labour movement. He happily entered an agreement, which lasted until 1961, 15 years after his death, to leave political policy to the 49 per cent shareholders, the TUC.

The Thomsons and Southwoods were exceptions. Another, in the 1980s, was Eddie Shah, founder of *Today*. Most barons saw their papers as means to an end. This was usually the advance of a political cause or party, and, less often than before 1945, the pursuit of their own public or political career. The Beaverbrook and Astor empires were both founded, before and after 1900, by rich men from overseas (Canada and the USA) who wished to buy their way into British public life.

With international multimedia empires and conglomerates, motives were more complicated. To ask Rupert Murdoch what were his 'goals' would have been to pose probably rather a difficult question (if the answer were serious). On the other hand, for Tiny Rowland of the conglomerate Lonrho, and for the Atlantic Richfield Oil Company of California, his predecessor as owners of *The Observer*, the control of a national paper might be no more than a useful form of corporate public relations and personal prestige.

Who, then, owned the national press in 1945? Typically, papers were controlled by a dominant, British born family, relatives of a pre-war, first

generation empire-builder, politically partisan but demure. No company had more than one daily, although there was a family connection between Lord Kemsley's *Daily Sketch* and his brother Lord Camrose's *Daily Telegraph*. Similarly, four of the eleven Sundays (including the *Empire News*) belonged to Lord Kemsley. The others were separately owned, but several were in partnership with a daily. The only fully independents were *The Observer*, belonging to a different branch of the Astor family from *The Times*, the Co-operative movement's *Reynolds' News*, and the huge *News of the World*, to become larger still, run by the Carr family.

Kemsley was less flamboyant than other barons of the earlier generation, like Northcliffe and Beaverbrook. Quietly Conservative, he did not seek major political office, as they had. Nor did his brother Lord Camrose. The second Lord Rothermere, now in control of the *Daily Mail*, was similarly reticent. Beaverbrook, though a wartime minister and intimate of Churchill, lived until 1965 but was a spent political force.

The dominant families of the other papers had what now would be called a low profile too. Colonel Astor had bought *The Times* in 1922 specifically to keep it out of the clutches of Lloyd George, who was seeking a personal political base and had money to spend from his earlier sale of honours when Prime Minister. Astor was a classic non-interventionist proprietor, rumoured to own *The Times* but not actually to read it. The Cadbury family, newspaper publishers since the Victorian heyday of the Liberal 'chocolate press', still ran the *News Chronicle* in a party interest. The *Guardian* was controlled by a family trust, dominated by relations of the formidable owner–editor (and sometime MP) C. P. Scott, one of the great Liberal voices of British journalism for half a century into the 1920s. *The Financial Times*, still fairly small and specialized, was controlled by the Crosthwaite-Eyres.

Very few papers indeed, therefore, had a wide spread of shareholders. The unusual structure of the *Daily Herald* certainly prevented it being dominated by a small group, apart from the elected brothers of the TUC council. The *Daily Worker* was run as a co-operative. The *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Pictorial* were in interlocking ownership; but the first Lord Rothermere, one of the founders (in 1903, when the *Mirror* was to be *for* women, edited *by* women – the women failed, and sacking them, the Harmsworths' henchman said, was like drowning kittens) had dispersed his shares on the Stock Exchange in 1931. The 1961 Press Commission was told that there were 40,000 shareholders.

Table 3.5 National newspapers: changes of controlling ownership, 1945–95

Newspaper	*Controlling owner in 1945, or founder*	*Purchaser*			
		1945–59	*1960–69*	*1970–79*	*1980–95*
Daily Express	Lord Beaverbrook			Trafalgar House 1977	United Newspapers 1985
Daily Herald/Sun	TUC/Odhams		Mirror Group 1961/1964 Murdoch 1969		
Daily Mail	Lord Rothermere (Associated Newspapers)				
Daily Mirror	Various			Reed 1970	Maxwell 1984 Mirror Group 1991
Daily Sketch/Graphic	Lord Kemsley	Lord Rothermere 1952 (closed 1971)			
Daily Star	(1978: Trafalgar House)				United Newspapers 1985
Daily Telegraph	Lord Camrose/Berry family				Conrad Black 1985
Daily Worker/Morning Star	Communist Party Co-op.				
Financial Times (Manchester)	Eyre Trust	Pearson 1957			
Guardian	Scott Trust				
Independent	(1986: various)				Mirror Gp Consortium 1994
News Chronicle	Cadbury family		Lord Rothermere 1960 (closed)		
The Post	(1988: Eddie Shah. Closed after 33 issues)				
The Times	Col. J. Astor		Roy Thomson 1966		Murdoch 1981
Today	(1986: Eddie Shah)				Lonrho 1986 Murdoch 1987
Empire News	Lord Kemsley	Roy Thomson 1959	Carr family 1960 (closed)		
Independent on Sunday	(1990: various)				Mirror Gp Consortium 1994

Mail on Sunday	(1982: Lord Rothermere)				
News of the World	Carr family		Murdoch 1969		
News on Sunday	(1987: various)				Owen Oyston 1978 (closed)
Observer	D. Astor			ARCO 1976	Lonrho 1981 Scott Trust 1993
People/Sunday People	Odhams		Mirror Group 1961	Reed 1970	Maxwell 1984 Mirror Gp 1991
Reynolds' News/Sunday Citizen	Co-op Press: closed 1967				
Sunday Chronicle	Lord Kemsley: closed 1955				
Sunday Corespondent	(1989; closed 1990: various)				
Sunday Dispatch	Lord Rothermere		Lord Beaverbrook 1961 (closed)		
Sunday Express	Lord Beaverbrook			Trafalgar Hse 1977	United Newspapers 1985
Sunday Graphic	Lord Kemsley	Roy Thomson 1959 (closed)			
Sunday Pictorial/Sunday Mirror	Various			Reed 1970	Maxwell 1984 Mirror Grp 1991
Sunday Sport	(1986: David Sullivan)				
Sunday Telegraph	(1961: Berry family)				Conrad Black 1985
Sunday Times	Lord Kemsley	Roy Thomson 1959			Murdoch 1981
Sunday Today	(1986: Eddie Shah)				Lonrho 1986. (Closed 1987)

Notes: Mirror Group ownership of Maxwell's papers is dated from his death in November 1991, but the shares were not actually sold by the administrators of his estate until September 1993.
The Mirror Group's control of the *Independent* titles rests on ownership of 43% of the shares.
In general, individuals and families have been named as owners: this does not mean they owned all the stock.

Taking a strict definition of a national paper (that is to say, excluding the *Guardian* and *Financial Times*), twelve companies in 1945 controlled between them nine dailies and eleven Sundays. This pattern continued relatively undisturbed until 1959, when a short period of major upheaval began. More changes came in 1969–71 and again in the mid-1980s, which was a period dominated by battles over new technology and the establishment of new titles. All these phases involved closures or the threat of closures. When proprietors sold, at any stage, whether anticipating amalgamation (like the *News Chronicle* and *Daily Mail*) or a continuing future, they did so because of flagging interest or energy, or because they had not the resources to turn round a weak paper in an increasingly competitive market.

Not counting sales associated with closure, there were some 17 major changes of ownership of national dailies and 21 of Sundays between 1945 and 1995. Most involved both dailies and Sundays. More than half took place after 1980. Tables 3.5 and 3.6 show the distribution of numbers

Table 3.6 National newspapers: changes of ownership by frequency, 1945–95

	National Dailies	*National Sundays*
No Change	*D. Mail*	*Mail on Sunday*
	Guardian	*S. Sport* (f. 1986)
	D. Sport (f. 1991)	
One Change	*D. Sketch* (1952)	*S. Graphic* (1959)
	F. Times (1957)	*Empire News* (1959)
	D. Star (1985)	*News of the World* (1969)
	D. Telegraph (1985)	*S. Telegraph* (1985)
	Independent (1994)	*S. Today* (1986)
		News on Sunday (1987)
		Independent on Sunday (1994)
Two Changes	*D. Herald/Sun* (1961, 1964, 1969)	*S. Times* (1959, 1981)
	Times (1966, 1981)	*S. Express* (1977, 1985)
	D. Express (1977, 1985)	
	Today (1986, 1987)	
Three Changes	*D. Mirror* (1970, 1984, 1991)	*S. Pictorial/S. Mirror* (1970, 1984, 1991)
		Observer (1976, 1981, 1993)
Four Changes		*S. People* (1961, 1970, 1984, 1991)

Note: The *Independent* and *Independent on Sunday* passed into the controlling ownership of Mirror Group Newspapers in March 1994, but editorial control remained with Newspaper Publishing plc.

and dates. The *Guardian* and *Daily Mail* alone stayed in the same ownership throughout the period. Most papers changed once or twice.

The first changes were minor – Kemsley's sale of the *Daily Sketch* to Lord Rothermere in 1952 and the Pearson/Westminster Press purchase of *The Financial Times* in 1957. Then in 1959 Lord Kemsley, apparently worried by falling income and the prospect of heavy death duties, decided to sell up completely. This was a major destabilizing move, at the provincial level too (see below). The main purchaser was Mr (not yet Lord) Roy Thomson, who got a national foothold through *The Sunday Times*. In March 1961 the Mirror Group bought Odhams, which gave them the *People* and 51 per cent of the *Daily Herald*. Also in 1961 the *Guardian* became London based and fully 'national' and *The Sunday Telegraph* was launched. Taking account too of the closure of the *News Chronicle*, the *Sunday Dispatch* and several other Sundays following the Kemsley sale, five out of twelve dailies and six out of eleven Sundays – half the entire national press – saw their ownership, existence or status (as a 'national') affected during less than two years between August 1959 and June 1961.

In 1964 the TUC sold its 40 per cent of the *Herald* to the Mirror Group, which relaunched it as the *Sun*. Then Thomson bought *The Times* late in 1966 and poured resources into it in an attempt to make it profitable. More significant were the changes at the end of the 1960s, with the irruption of Rupert Murdoch. After a tough battle with Robert Maxwell he bought the *News of the World* early in January 1969, and at the end of the year he bought the still failing *Sun*. The Mirror Group's decision to sell it to him was perhaps the greatest miscalculation in post-war press history. Murdoch immediately relaunched it as a tabloid and turned it against the flagship of its previous owners. Linked to the disposal of the *Sun* was a takeover of the Mirror Group by the papermaking conglomerate Reed International, which already had a large shareholding in the *Mirror*. In 1971 the *Sketch* and *Mail* merged. In the three-year period 1969–71, then, three out of ten dailies and three out of seven Sundays changed ownership or status.

Failing energy and resources accounted for two sales in the mid-1970s. *The Observer*, lagging behind *The Sunday Times* and without a daily partner as a cushion, was sold in 1976 by David Astor to Atlantic Richfield – a quite unexpected knight galloping out of the mists. The following year the Beaverbrook papers were sold to the Trafalgar House

conglomerate. Unlike, say, Rothermere's Associated Newspapers, Beaverbrook had never seriously diversified, not even into the provincial press, and although the *Sunday Express* remained profitable, the *Daily Express* and London *Evening Standard* were in trouble. Victor Matthews, Trafalgar's vice-chairman, was in the familiar self-made baron mould and duly acquired his barony from Mrs Thatcher.

Changes in the 1980s came more frequently. Half the dailies existing in 1981, and all the Sundays except the *News of the World* (six out of seven), changed hands within the next five years. Two new dailies, *Today* and the *Independent*, started successfully (though *Today* changed hands twice). A third new daily (*The Post*) quickly died. No fewer than four Sundays were founded, of which only the *Sunday Sport* and *Independent on Sunday* survived.

Some of these sales and start-ups involved existing publishers. The foundation of the *Mail on Sunday* filled an obvious gap in the Rotheremere holdings, for instance. When Roy Thomson's son decided to pull out of national papers, having spent millions on *The Times* in pursuit of production economies, Murdoch was the purchaser. When ARCO tired of losses at *The Observer*, Tiny Rowland's Lonrho, already owner of a Glasgow daily, bought it. In 1986 Rowland rescued *Today*, when its founder Eddie Shah ran out of cash after the paper's shaky launch. Rowland sold it on to Murdoch. By 1993 Lonrho, too, tired of subsidizing the *Observer* and sold it to the *Guardian*.

There were notable newcomers, however. First was Robert Maxwell, who in 1984 achieved his long-held ambition to play the press baron role and won the *Mirror* newspapers from Reed at an acceptable price. These ambitions came to a spectacular end when Maxwell disappeared overboard from his yacht on 5 November 1991. Did he jump or did he fall? No one knows for sure. As awareness of the extent of his financial malpractices became greater, if not clearer, excuses for jumping multiplied. An easily dramatized example was the disclosure that he had fraudulently misused Mirror pension funds to bolster other parts of his empire. The accountants administering his estate sold off shares in the Mirror newspapers in September 1993.

Next in line – and altogether more orthodox – was the latest Canadian to buy into the British press, Conrad Black. A businessman turned newspaper owner of conservative views, he bought the *Telegraph* papers from the last of the Berry family in the newspaper business, Camrose's

younger son Michael, Lord Hartwell. The *Telegraph* had never strengthened its base by diversifying, and it lacked the resources to modernize. After Black's entry to the market came the expanding provincial group, United Newspapers, which bought the *Express* group in 1985 from Trafalgar House.

The two newcomers to found papers make an incongruous couple. David Sullivan's *Sunday Sport* certainly looked like a newspaper, but its contents, and especially its concern with sex and its blurring of fact and fiction, seemed more appropriate to a magazine. (The same was true of the weekday version which was launched a few years later.) When Sullivan's company sought to buy a Bristol evening paper in 1990, it was barred by the Monopolies Commission.

Sullivan was in a tradition of 'giving the people what they want'. Andreas Whittam-Smith, the financial journalist who put together the team and the capital behind the *Independent*, was more high-minded. His ambition was epitomized in the paper's name. To ensure that its ownership, like its contents, would be in thrall to no financial or political vested interest, the smallest whiff of press baron was excluded. Nobody was to own more than ten per cent of the shares (later adjusted to twenty per cent). Two of the largest shareholders were likeminded newspapers in Italy and Spain (*la Repubblica* and *el Pais*).

As with much else in life, highmindedness fell victim to financial hardship. The *Independent* struggled for market share in the recessionary 1990s. With none of the reserves of a large organisation, it faced formidable competition in a broadsheet market much changed from the mid-1980s: a rejuvenated *Daily Telegraph*; a *Times* arguably rediscovering its historic character; a comprehensive *Financial Times*; and a determinedly resourceful, innovative *Guardian*. In addition, it had to support the *Independent on Sunday*, whose launch was affected by competition from the *Sunday Correspondent*. To raise new capital, the limit on individual shareholdings was further eased. When this proved insufficient, a deal was struck with the *Mirror* group in March 1994. Mirror acquired a controlling interest, based on a 43 per cent shareholding. Editorial control – and the spirit of the paper's original ambition – remained, on the other hand, in principle with its founders, Newspaper Publishing plc.

Such a sketch oversimplifies the pattern of ownership and the complexities of the underlying economics. It conceals elements of

Table 3.7 National daily and Sunday newspapers: major group ownerships

Group	*Number of titles and percentage of circulation*														
	1947		*1957*		*1967*		*1977*			*1987*			*1994*		
National dailies															
Associated Newspapers (*Mail*, etc.)	1	13	2	21	2	19	1	13		1	12		1		13
Beaverbrook (*Express*)	1	24	1	25	1	25		–			–			–	
Mirror Group (*Mirror*, etc.)[a]	1	23	1	28	2	41		–			–		2		20
Kemsley (*Sketch*)	1	5		–		–		–			–			–	
Odhams (*Herald*)	1	14	1	10		–		–			–			–	
Thomson (*Times*)		–		–	1	2	1	2			–			–	
News International (*Sun*, etc.)		–		–		–		1	27	3	32		3		38
Reed (*Mirror*)		–		–		–		1	28		–			–	
Trafalgar House (*Express*)		–		–		–		1	17		–			–	
Maxwell (*Mirror*)		–		–		–			–	1	21			–	
United (*Express*, etc.)		–		–		–			–	2	19		2		15
Total, 3 largest	3	61	4	74	5	85		3	72	6	72		7		73
National Sundays															
Associated Newspapers (*Dispatch*, etc.)	1	8	1	8		–			–	1	10		1		12
Beaverbrook (*Express*)	1	9	1	12	1	17			–		–			–	
Mirror Group (*Mirror*, etc.)[a]	1	15	1	20	2	45			–		–		3		31
Kemsley (Various)	4	18	3	15		–			–		–			–	
News of the World	1	29	1	25	1	25			–		–			–	
Odhams (*People*)	1	17	1	17		–			–		–			–	

Thomson (*Times*)		–			–		1		6	1		7		–			–	
News International (*N.O.W.*, etc.)		–			–			–		1		26	2		36	2		38
Reed (*Mirror*, etc.)		–			–			–		2		42		–			–	
Trafalgar House (*Express*)		–			–			–		1		17		–			–	
Maxwell (*Mirror*, etc.)		–			–			–			–		2		33		–	
United (*Express*)		–			–			–			–		1		13	1		10
Total, 3 largest	6		64	3		62	4		87	4		85	5		82	6		81
National dailies and Sundays																		
Associated Newspapers	2		10	3		13	2		8	1		6	2		11	2		13
Beaverbrook	2		15	2		17	2		20		–			–			–	
Mirror Group[a]	2		18	2		23	2		43		–			–		5		26
News of the World	1		18	1		16	1		16		–			–			–	
Kemsley	5		13	3		10		–			–			–			–	
Odhams	2		16	2		14		–			–			–			–	
Thomson		–			–		2		5	2		5		–			–	
News International		–			–			–		2		26	5		34	5		38
Reed		–			–			–		3		36		–			–	
Trafalgar House		–			–			–		2		17		–			–	
Maxwell		–			–			–			–		3		27		–	
United		–			–			–			–		3		16	3		12
Total, 3 largest	5		52	5		56	5		79	7		79	11		77	13		76

[a]Ownership in 1994 was different from the earlier years.

Table omits small circulation papers or groups.

Sources: Royal Commission on the Press, 1947; Press Council Annual Reports.

multiple and shifting cross-ownership, for instance, which are discussed in chapter 5. For many years too, various papers printed each other under contract (for example, *The Times* printed *The Observer*, and the *Guardian* printed *The Sunday Times*). This link eventually translated into ownership. By 1993 all ten Sundays (including the *Sport*) were in the same ownership as dailies. In 1945, three out of eleven had been independent.

These other connections give point to the issue of concentration. Table 3.7 shows each major ownership group's share of titles and circulation at 10-year intervals. The pattern was not a simple and consistent move towards concentration, either of titles or of circulation. The enormous Sunday circulations of the post-war years meant that even without owning more than one paper, the *News of the World* had the equal largest market share in 1947. In contrast, Kemsley had five papers but ranked only fifth.

The circulation share of the three largest groups grew greatly between 1947 and 1967. But they were not all the same groups within the different daily and Sunday categories each year: for instance, Beaverbrook was a top daily but not a top Sunday group in 1947. Nor were they the same top three from one decade to the next: groups such as Kemsley and Maxwell disappeared, and the market share of a survivor such as Associated Newspapers fluctuated quite widely. Nor were the largest shares by an *individual* group to be found at the end of the period: they were the Mirror Group's (more than 40 per cent in each category) in 1967. If the figures were shown year on year, other variations would appear too.

The large concentration of circulation in the late 1960s was due to the Mirror Group's purchase of the *Daily Herald* and the *People* at a time when Murdoch had not yet arrived to challenge the dominance of the *Daily Mirror* over the tabloid market. Once he had, the pattern changed. His own success, with its accumulation of titles, meant that by 1987 and 1994 the circulation share of the top three groups had slipped back – but the number of titles within them was greater than ever. Overall, it is important to note that while Fleet Street was dominated by large groups, only one, Associated, survived the whole period from 1945 to 1995. It was the *combination* of large circulation share and a large number of titles that gave concentration its distinctive character by 1995.

The provincial press

The main features of the provincial press were set well before 1939. The period 1945–95 saw the number of morning papers decline, with total sales fluctuating; gains and losses among the evening titles, with a long term decline in sales; and more losses than gains among the weeklies, whose market changed sharply towards the end with the arrival of free sheets. Chain ownership, built up between the wars by the manoeuvres of the press barons (mainly seeking economies of scale), remained a crucial factor.

The number of provincial mornings dropped by one-third from 29 to 18 (table 3.8). They fell one by one, like apples off a tree, but with the largest loss between 1955 and 1964. Circulations differed greatly, and there was no consistent trend. Some great names of the past survived at a much reduced level (*Yorkshire Post, Newcastle Journal*). Some had much the same sales after forty years as before. Others had more than doubled. Circulation size was no clue to survival. Provincial newspaper economics were a complex matter, including the size of the market, proximity to competing markets, the range of other media and membership or otherwise of a chain. The particular towns on the list thus had no obvious logic. Glasgow, Edinburgh and Cardiff were to be expected. But why on earth Leamington? If Nottingham, why not Leicester? If Plymouth, why not Exeter or Southampton? The historical explanations lie mainly in the middle and late nineteenth century, when newspapers were founded often in a political cause, or in connection with news about trade and commerce. All of the other towns just mentioned, moreover, also had evening papers. The seventeen morning survivors in 1995 were the remnants of an army that had numbered over fifty in 1900.

Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham had competing morning papers in 1945, but only Glasgow and Belfast did in 1995 (the *Glasgow Herald* really competed more with the Edinburgh *Scotsman* than with the *Daily Record*, and the two Belfast papers reflected different sectarian viewpoints). Manchester lost its morning papers altogether when the *Guardian* left. Bradford, Brighton and Nottingham also lost their papers. No town got a new morning paper. Staff of the Scottish *Daily Express* tried to fill the gap when local publication of their paper was ended in 1974. With Labour government backing they founded the *Scottish Daily*

Table 3.8 Provincial morning newspapers

Town	*Newspaper*	*1945 owner*	*Circulation (thousands)*	*Purchaser/ closure (date)*	*1994 circulation (thousands)*
Birmingham	*B. Post*	Iliffe family	40	Ingersoll (USA) (1987); Midland in (Nov 1991)	28[a]
	Gazette and *Express*	Westminster Press	98	merged (1956)	–
Bradford	*Yorks. Observer*	Westminister Press	27	merged (1956)	–
Brighton	*Sussex Daily News*	Infield family	6	merged (1956)	–
Bristol	*Western Daily Press*	Allen family	25	Bristol Evening Post (1960)	65
Darlington	*Northern Echo*	Westminster Press	114		81
Ipswich	*E. Anglian D. Times*	Colman family	30		49
Leamington	*Morning News*	3 local families	4	EMAP[b], closed 1992	–
Leeds	*Yorks. Post*	Various	139	United (1969)	82
Liverpool	*Daily Post*	Various	62	Trinity International Holdings[a]	75
Manchester	*M. Guardian*	Scott Trust	80	Goes national (1959)	–
	Daily Dispatch	Lord Kemsley	475	merged (1955)	
Newcastle	*Journal*	Lord Kemsley	146	Thomson (1959)	
Norwich	*Eastern D. Press*	Colman family	35		80
Nottingham	*N. Journal*	Westminster Press	30	merged (1953)	–
	N. Guardian	T Bailey Forman	na	closed (1973)	–
Plymouth	*W. Morning News*	Sir H Harmsworth	36		55
Sheffield	*Morning Telegraph*	Lord Kemsley	116	Thomson (1959); United (1967); closed (1986)	–
Cardiff	*Western Mail*	Lord Kemsley	74	Thomson (1959)	69
Aberdeen	*Press & Journal*	Lord Kemsley	53	Thomson (1959)	107

Glasgow	*G. Herald*	Outram (various)	78	Lonrho (1964); Caledonian Publ. (1992)	113
	Daily Record	Lord Kemsley	300	Mirror Group (1955); Maxwell (1984); Mirror Gp (1991)	737
	Bulletin	Outram (various)	155	closed (1960)	–
Dundee	*Courier & Advertiser*	DC Thomson	80	–	
Edinburgh	*Scotsman*	Findlay family	60	Thomson (1953)	108
Paisley	*Daily Express*[c]	[W. A. Lochhead]	–	Trinity International Holdings[b]	9
Belfast	*News-Letter*	Henderson family	30	Century Newspapers[a]; Tindle (1989)	33
	Northern Whig	Cunningham family	48	closed (1963)	–
	Irish D. Telegraph	Baird family	6	merged (1952)	–
	I. News & B. Morning News	Irish News Ltd.	32		44
Total Circulation			2,379		1877
Number of titles		29		21 (1960); 19 (1975)	19
Number of separate owners		19		17 15	11

[a] Monday–Friday circulation.
[b] Dates not known.
[c] An evening paper in 1945.
1994 circulations are January–June.
Source: ABC.

News but failed to capture a market. Copies of the *Express* continued to be available, shipped up from England.

Few large towns lacked an evening paper. The 1947 Press Commission listed nine with a population of over 100,000 but no paper, and 41 from 50,000–100,000. Only 10 of these were far distant from an existing paper. The precise number of evening papers has not always been easy to fix, since some of those with distinct names (such as the *Evening Mail* of Sandwell and Dudley in the late 1970s) were in fact local versions of a 'series' title (in this case, the Birmingham *Mail*). The number varied between 70 and 80. Unlike the mornings, the number of titles remained much the same until the early 1980s, but total circulation fell. Evening papers still reached 90 per cent of their local households in the early 1960s: by 1980, they were down to 60 per cent. (Clark, 1981, p. 6).

The first wave of closures did not come until between 15 and 20 years after the Second World War. These were all in towns that still had evening paper competition: Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Edinburgh. In each case the lower circulation title went under. The fate of the Manchester *Evening Chronicle* (1963) was typical. In the two years before its death, advertising volume dropped by a quarter and circulation by about 10 per cent (Clark, 1981, p. 12). Its competitor, the Manchester *Evening News*, outsold it by a ratio of 2:1. Where a paper closed in these circumstances, the survivor picked up on average rather more than half its circulation.

This shake-out left only Glasgow with two evening papers. Glasgow, uniquely, had had three at the end of the war. The weakest, the *Evening News*, closed in 1955. The two others continued till 1973, when the closure of the *Evening Citizen* meant that no town outside London was supporting more than one evening paper – and London went the same way in 1980.

In contrast to the morning papers, which suffered most heavily from the competition of the nationals, the evenings also had scope for growth in towns where an evening was not already established. At exactly the same time that the 'shake-out' was happening – the early 1960s – the largest expansion of evening titles since the 1890s was under way. Twelve new papers were launched between 1959 and 1970, either in locations on the edge of the circulation area of a 'parent' paper (such as in Hereford, Peterborough, Bromley, Doncaster and Telford) or in outer-London towns like Reading, Luton, Slough and Watford. A few

of these papers became firmly established (and the latter helped kill the London evenings), but more, including some founded later in the 1970s (such as the Chelmsford *Evening Herald* and the Guildford *Daily Advertiser*), did not survive long into the 1980s. Altogether (including 'series' papers) about 20 evening papers were launched in the 30 years before 1985.

The post-war trend in evening papers, then, was a clear-cut elimination of towns with more than one locally based paper; the establishment of papers in perhaps 20 towns that did not have them in 1945; and the survival of all the existing papers that faced no home town competition as early as 1945.

As with the morning papers, circulation size was no clue to profitability. In 1945, papers in Bath, Carlisle, Darlington, Scarborough and North Shields all published not more than 15,000 copies a day (the Scarborough *Evening News* published 8,000). Papers in Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool published over a quarter of a million. By 1985 the average had dropped but the spread was narrower, with a few exceptions at the extremes (the Manchester *Evening News* with 300,000 and the Darlington *Evening Echo* with 12,000). A full list of titles is given in the appendix while table 3.9 consolidates some of the information.

Trends in the number and location of morning and evening titles can also be set side by side. At the end of the war, Glasgow had three morning and three evening papers; Belfast four and one. Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham had two mornings and two evenings each. Bristol, Edinburgh, Leeds and Liverpool had one morning and two evenings; eleven towns had one of each, and Leicester had no mornings but two evenings. By 1985, Glasgow and Belfast had two mornings and an evening each, and 17 towns had one morning and one evening.

Put another way, 21 towns outside London had a morning or evening choice in 1945; 14 did by 1995 (and generally a more limited choice). The reality of such choice depended on whether a reader cared who owned the papers. In 14 of the 21, morning and evening papers were in the same ownership, and some of these were themselves in national or regional chains. This situation continued.

At the end of the war, provincial newspaper ownership took three forms. Some papers were still in local companies, with or without a morning/evening partner, and controlled by one or two families or a scatter of shareholders. This was, so to speak, the 'historic form'. Others

Table 3.9 Provincial evening newspapers

	1945	*1961*	*1975*	*1994*
Total number of titles	76	74	79	72
New since previous date	–	1	17	5
Closed	–	3	12	12
Titles with circulation[a]				
35,000 or less	29	19	21	25
36–70,000	20	16	29	26
71–105,000	10	11	8	9
106–140,000	6	6	8	6
141,000 or more	10	16	13	4
Total circulation (thousands)	5,389	6,613	6,515	4,499
Smallest	8	10	8	13
Largest	293	412	386	217
Mean average	71	97	82	62
Total number of owners	39	31	31	25
Owners with				
1 title	27	18	19	10
2	5	6	5	7
3	3	1	3	1
4	1	3	–	2
5–9	3	2	1	4
10–12	–	–	2	–
13	–	1	1	1
14	–	–	–	–

Includes England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland. Some titles are in 'series' (i.e. similar content but different name) and numbers vary in different sources.

[a] Some circulations are confidential. Number of titles does not always add up to 'Total number' above. Most circulation figures are Monday to Friday averages.

Sources: Royal Commissions on the Press; Press Council Annual Reports; ABC.

were part of a provincial newspaper group. The remainder were in chains, some of which belonged to the national press undertakings.

Table 3.10 shows the size of these categories and, with table 3.9 and the appendix, the decline of independence over the years. In 1947 over half the mornings and one-third of the evenings were owned by companies with few or no other newspaper interests elsewhere. Eight of these companies owned both a morning and an evening paper (the *Scotsman* and the Edinburgh *Evening Dispatch*, for example, and the Nottingham *Guardian* and *Evening Post*). Eight owned only a morning

Table 3.10 The provincial press: concentration

Type of paper	*1947*		*1961*		*1974*		*1987*		*1993*	
	Number of titles	*Percentage of circulation*	*Number of titles*	*Percentage of circulation*	*Number of titles*	*Percentage of circulation*	*Number of titles*	*Percentage of circulation*	*Number of titles*	*Percentage of circulation*
Morning										
5 major chains	11	63	8	36	9	38	8	30	8	33
Other main groups	18	37	4	40	4	46	4	37	2	6
Other			9	24	6	16	6	33	7	61
Total	29	100	21	100	19	100	18	100	17	100
Evening										
5 major chains	33	44	37	50	43	58	37	55	36	52
Other main groups	42	56	8	23	7	16	5	14	12	19
Other			30	27	27	26	31	31	20	29
Total	75	100	75	100	77	100	73	100	68	100
Weekly (paid for)										
5 major chains	82	8	135	13	211	24	133	16	152	27
Other main groups	1,080	92	19	2	84	9	122	8	99	10
Other			1,069	85	844	67	547	76	596	63
Total	1,162	100	1,223	100	1,139	100	802	100	847	100
Weekly (free)										
5 major chains		–		–		–	144	20	172	21
Other main groups		–		–		–	177	22	166	20
Other		–		–		–	499	58	680	59
Total							820	100	1,018	100

The five major chains are the same for each category each year but vary between years. Pearson/Westminster Press and Associated Newspapers are the only two represented in each year.

Sources: Royal Commissions on the Press; Press Council Annual Report; ABC.

paper (such as the *Liverpool Daily Post*) and a ninth, Outram's, owned two in the same town (Glasgow). Nineteen owned only evening papers. Some of the family firms went back generations. Tillotsons, who controlled the Bolton *Evening News* until 1970, when it joined a chain, had done so for 104 years. Graham of Wolverhampton, Grimes of Blackpool, Hawkins of Bristol and Jeans of Liverpool, were all in the saddle in the 1940s. Most were unhorsed in the 1970s.

The provincial groups with papers in two or three towns were little different from the other independents. The Iliffe family had papers in Birmingham and Coventry, the Colmans in Ipswich and Norwich, the Storeys in Portsmouth, Sunderland and Hartlepool. The fourth group, Southern Newspapers, was represented in Southampton and Bournemouth.

The growth of chains between the wars had been dramatic. In 1923 they controlled only 10 per cent of evening titles. By 1947 they controlled 11 of the 29 mornings and 33 of the 76 evenings (with minority interest in six more). Lord Kemsley's group was largest, with six mornings, nine evenings and three Sundays (including the *Empire News*). The Westminster Press, controlled by the Pearson family (Lord Cowdray), had four mornings, nine evenings and the Birmingham *Sunday Mercury*. The Harmsworth family interests, chiefly derived from the brothers Alfred and Harold, Lords Northcliffe and Rothermere, and trading as Associated Newspapers, had seven evenings and a major interest in four others (as well as managing, but not owning, a twelfth). A separate Harmsworth chain owned a morning and three evenings, and United Newspapers controlled or had a major interest in six.

The trend of ownership across the post-war years had four interlinked parts: independent ownerships declined; the provincial groups carried on; there were manoeuvrings among the major chains; and – the greatest upheaval – Kemsley left the market altogether and was replaced by a new player, the international Thomson organization.

The decline of the independent mornings was produced as much by amalgamations and closures as by sales. Only a few papers, notably the *Scotsman* and the *Yorkshire Post*, were sold to chains (Thomson and United). Provincial groups like the Colmans (Norwich and Ipswich mornings) generally stayed with their papers. The activities of the chains, however, meant that only a third of the mornings still published in 1995 were in the same ownership as in 1945.

The independent evenings survived less well. Fewer than 10 of the 27 'single town' companies of 1947 remained in control by 1995, and most of these ran smallish papers in towns like Halifax and Oldham. The others sold out in the late 1960s and 1970s, often to the chains.

Kemsley's disposal of his provincial papers in 1959, of course, was part of the larger sale of his national newspaper interests. Thomson had bought *The Scotsman* in 1953, as an entry to the British market. The purchase of 11 provincial dailies and one Sunday was followed by various manoeuvres. In 1963 the Manchester *Evening Chronicle* was closed, and the two Sheffield papers were swapped with United's Edinburgh *Evening News*. Thomson then closed the weaker Edinburgh *Evening Dispatch*, which he had bought with *The Scotsman*. The following year he tried to buy Outram's Glasgow papers but was beaten off by nationalist feeling (Thomson being Canadian) and the resources of the Scottish financier Lord Fraser. The papers eventually passed with the rest of Lord Fraser's holdings to the multinational conglomerate Lonrho. Meanwhile, Westminster Press and Associated slightly enlarged their chains, partly, as with Thomson, by new launches. Thomson, in particular, brought to the industry a dynamic concern with techniques of selling and marketing.

The Iliffe interests expanded too, through launches and the purchase of the Birmingham *Sunday Mercury* from the Westminster Press. They became, like United, relatively much more important than in 1947. By 1977, when the third Press Commission reported, five organisations stood out because of their provincial interests: Thomson, Westminster, Associated, United and Iliffe. United and Iliffe alone had no national press interests. But by 1988 Thomson had sold theirs and United had acquired some.

It is difficult to build details about the weekly press into this account, not least because of problems of definition. The 1974 Press Commission found that nearly a third of weekly papers shared editorial content with other weeklies, and half shared advertising. Many, in other words, were in series of associated titles.

This development had certainly been increasing steadily since the war. The 1947 Press Commission had already pointed it out – but the proportion sharing at that time was only one-fifth. Moreover, the total number of titles was very much larger. The decline shown in table 3.10 was continuous, although the net figure conceals a considerable number of births. About 200 new titles were launched between 1961 and 1974,

for example, but 300 probably died. In the same period, 40 per cent of the new titles were actually new editions of existing papers. Most people launching weeklies were already weekly publishers, many of whom were also contract printers.

As weekly ownership declined, it also became more concentrated. The number of towns with a choice of weekly papers was down from 226 in 1961 to about 150 in 1974. As table 3.10 shows, while the largest category of owners was still the independents, the number of weeklies taken into the provincial and national chains increased enormously.

The later pattern of weeklies was further complicated by the growth of free sheets. These began to flourish in the early 1970s, and by 1975 there were 185. They increased steadily and from the mid-1980s outnumbered the paid-for weeklies, although the recession of the 1990s saw a sharp reduction. Because they were delivered door-to-door, their 'guaranteed' circulation far exceeded the others – 42 million at their peak in 1989 compared with 7.4. The response of the existing publishers was traditional: they founded their own free weeklies or bought up the newcomers. By 1987, two-thirds of the titles and circulation were concentrated among two-dozen established publishers, with Pearson, Thomson, Associated and other familiar names controlling 20–40 each. Half a dozen groups of some size produced free weeklies only. Largest was the Yellow Advertiser Group, second only in circulation (two million) to Thomson. In Birmingham, a free daily paper was launched in 1984, to compete with the old morning and evening papers.

The implications of concentration of provincial press ownership are greater when its geographical variation is taken into account. The chains generally concentrated in particular regions, although not to the extent of local monopoly. (In 1961, for instance, the 'leading publisher' had more than 50 per cent of evening sales in seven regions. By 1974 this number had dropped to four.) Associated Newspapers, for example, was strongest in the south-west, with five evenings and two mornings in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Gloucestershire, and 60 per cent of Cornwall's circulation of weeklies in 1974. Iliffe, similarly, concentrated in the west midlands, especially Birmingham and Coventry. With nine weeklies acquired from 1961–74, their morning and evening interests accounted for most of the sales in the major part of the Birmingham conurbation. United Newspapers expanded strongly into Lancashire. Westminster Press had three dailies and nineteen weeklies in the north

and a spread of publications across the south. In turn, 'a striking development', as the 1974 Press Commission researchers called it, was 'the concentration of the ownership of newspapers in contiguous towns into a few hands' (Hartley et al., 1977, p. 73).

Three economic factors explain much of that concentration. First, firms economized through the *joint production of evenings and weeklies*: one sign of this was the closure of 79 printing centres by dailies and chains between 1961 and 1975, leaving 126 in production. Second, 'series publications' gave scope for *editorial economies of scale*. Third, a compact market made for *more efficient advertising sales*.

Similar considerations helped to explain the survival of the provincial dailies in the face of competition from the nationals. Provincial mornings could keep down their overheads and editorial costs if they had an evening partner. Even so, the 1974 Press Commission estimated that perhaps eight out of fifteen mornings they examined were being subsidized by an evening paper. Provincials also benefited from local display advertising (linked directly to retail sales activity) and from classified ads (dependent on households and population size).

In principle, the effect of concentration upon competition was, of course, to reduce it. For the provincial press, any calculation is complicated by questions of market boundaries and different types of publication. Thus provincial mornings, we have seen, competed chiefly with national mornings. Monopoly evening papers often competed with a morning paper from elsewhere (such as the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* with the *Yorkshire Post* from Leeds), for morning papers circulated far more widely than the evenings. Evening and weekly papers faced the stiffest competition at the fringes of their circulation areas. In the mid-1970s, evening papers in about 30 towns faced competition from a rural-owned weekly. The effect of all such variations was to make it in the interests of publishers not to specialize in one type of paper but, as they did increasingly over the post-war decades, to spread their interests across morning, evening and weekly papers – and, in a few cases, Sundays. In addition, there was obviously competition from non- print media for advertising revenue and from other goods and services for the money in the newspaper reader's pocket.

Finally, the links between the provincial and the national press are summarized in table 3.11. The baron with a finger in every pie was in fact less common than might be supposed. Most groups had most kinds

Table 3.11 The national and provincial press: concentration (number of titles and percentage of circulation)

Group	1947 National mornings (no.)	(%)	1947 National & provincial Sundays (no.)	(%)	1947 Provincial dailies (no.)	(%)	1961 National mornings (no.)	(%)	1961 National & provincial Sundays (no.)	(%)	1961 Provincial dailies (no.)	(%)
Associated Newspapers	1	13	1	7	8	8	2	23	–	–	14	11
Beaverbrook	1	25	1	9	1	*	1	27	1	17	1	3
Mirror Group	1	24	1	14	1	*	2	39	3	42	1	6
Kemsley	1	5	6	20	15	23	–	–	–	–	–	–
News of the World	–	–	1	27	–	–	–	–	1	25	–	–
Odhams	1	14	1	16	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pearson/Westminster	–	–	1	*	13	7	1	1	–	–	9	5
United	–	–	–	–	4	3	–	–	–	–	4	5
Iliffe	–	–	–	–	3	?	–	–	1	1	5	8
Thomson	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	4	13	17
Murdoch/News Int'l	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Reed	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Lonrho	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Maxwell/Pergamon	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Hollinger	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Group	1976 National mornings (no.)	1976 National mornings (%)	1976 National & provincial Sundays (no.)	1976 National & provincial Sundays (%)	1976 Provincial dailies (no.)	1976 Provincial dailies (%)	1994 National mornings (no.)	1994 National mornings (%)	1994 National & provincial Sundays (no.)	1994 National & provincial Sundays (%)	1994 Provincial dailies (no.)	1994 Provincial dailies (%)
Associated Newspapers	1	12	–	–	14	10	1	13	1	11	16	19
Beaverbrook	1	18	1	16	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Mirror Group	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	20	4	27	1	11
Kemsley	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
News of the World	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Odhams	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pearson/Westminister	1	1	–	–	12	7	1	2	1	*	9	6
United	–	–	–	–	8	8	2	15	1	8	6	7
Iliffe	–	–	1	1	5	6	–	–	–	–	–	–
Thomson	1	2	2	7	14	15	–	–	3	1	10	13
Murdoch/News Int'l	1	26	1	23	–	–	3	38	2	33	–	–
Reed	1	27	4	41	1	7	–	–	–	–	4	2
Lonrho	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Maxwell/Pergamon	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Hollinger	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	8	1	4	–	–

* Less than one percent.

Sources: Royal Commissions on the Press; Press Council; ABC.

of paper; only a few had all. The most 'complete' baron, in this sense, was Kemsley in 1947, with a large share both of titles and circulation. No group was directly comparable in 1961; but by 1976 the Thomson group was strong in all sectors. So was United, in 1995, having acquired national papers by purchasing the Beaverbrook/Trafalgar titles.

In general the pattern reflects the changes previously discussed in the national press. Owners such as Kemsley, Beaverbrook and Odhams dropped out. Newcomers such as Reed and Thomson entered but then partially withdrew. Other newcomers such as Murdoch stayed. Many of the Kemsley provincial papers were still in the same group in 1995 as in 1947, but now under a different owner. The greatest continuity of ownership was in the Rothermere Associated Newspapers combine and the smaller and narrower Pearson/Westminster group. But for a 'weakness' in the Sunday sector during most of the period, Associated would have been a consistently comprehensive group.

The addition of the provincial press, therefore, does not much affect the earlier conclusion about concentration among the nationals. Neither of the two major national groups in 1995, Murdoch and the Mirror group, was strong in the provincial sector. Nor were the strongest provincials, Thomson, Associated and United, dominant in either the quality or the popular national market. The large issues about press concentration concerned the national sector and the incorporation of the press with other media and financial interests.

4 Media 1945–1995: Radio and Television

Public service broadcasting

Regular radio broadcasting started in 1922 and the BBC was founded in 1926. From its early days, broadcasting was therefore seen to be a legitimate field of public policy and its development was shaped by periodic government inquiries. In contrast with the press, whose three Royal Commissions stemmed from the fear or fact of concentration and contraction, these concerned the management of expansion. Pre-war were the Sykes (1923) and Crawford (1926) Committees, which set the pattern of 'public service broadcasting' run by the BBC, and the Ullswater Committee (1936), which confirmed it. Post-war came Beveridge (1951), Pilkington (1962), Annan (1977) and Peacock (1986). The Beveridge report ensured that TV would expand on the same lines as radio. Pilkington determined the allocation of the third TV channel to the BBC not ITV. Annan set the scene for the introduction of Channel 4. Peacock, strictly about finance, cut open the large can of worms about the organization of broadcasting in the era of satellites, cable and new information technology. In addition there were occasional narrower, often technical, reports. A comprehensive new inquiry might have seemed due in the mid-1990s, on the historic timetable. But by then it was increasingly implausible to think of 'broadcasting' as a single, coherent policy area, suitable for deliberation by one jumbo-sized group of wise persons. Instead, inquiries focused on specific issues, such as media cross-ownership and the future of the BBC.

Down the years these various reports necessarily formulated explicit principles of broadcasting organization and practice. Too expedient and unsystematic to be called a philosophy, they comprise even so a kind of official doctrine, rather as though a series of government inquiries on the press had set down an official theory of 'the Fourth Estate'. They have been continuously unpicked or embroidered in the process of open criticism and riposte which the idea of public accountability imposes, part legally part morally, upon the broadcasters. Memoirs, prestige lectures and academic treatises have all added to the argument. Thus the BBC's proposals for *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, for example, published in July 1969 as a kind of White Paper, provoked what the BBC called 'vehement debate' and the Annan Committee 'a public row of splendid proportions' (Annan, 1977, p. 12), including debates in both houses of Parliament. Similarly, renewal of the BBC's Charter in 1996 was preceded by a long period of argument before, in and after the production of such documents as the BBC's own position paper, *Extending Choice* (1992); the Government's Green (discussion) Paper of the same year, *The Future of the BBC*; a detailed investigation by the House of Commons National Heritage Committee (HC 77, 1993–94); and the Government's eventual decision, in a White Paper in 1994, to renew the Charter largely along the lines the BBC wanted.

Throughout the period 1945–95, then, the system governed by these principles can be characterized as 'public service broadcasting'. The phrase itself was not perhaps in common currency until it came under challenge in the 1980s. Previously people were as likely to talk of a 'public broadcasting system'; but this became confusing when the distinctive US TV network with that name was established, often using British programmes. When the challenge did come, it was a positive onslaught. Many people, especially broadcasters themselves, doubted whether the principles could survive in the new structures and financial rules which gradually took shape in the 1990s.

The public service principles referred both to the *goals* of broadcasting and to a particular *form of organization* through which (alone?) they could be achieved. As with other principles, there could be arguments about whether they were in fact implemented in particular practices (finance by advertising, for example, or the quality of news coverage). They had to be flexible, too, adjusting to the new post-war broadcast medium of television; then to a new scale and range of programmes, increasingly

controversial, and to changes in the society they served; next to the introduction of what at first was known as 'commercial television' in 1955; and in the 1990s to the challenge of cable, satellite, video, channel proliferation and the ending of settled arrangements about the limits and forms of competition.

The first principle was that radio should be run as a monopoly. Since the airwaves were limited, they were 'a valuable form of public property', as the Sykes Committee put it. Secondly, the monopoly was controlled by the government. Partly this was because the division of the radio spectrum was fixed internationally, and the government was guarantor of British conformity to the agreement. There were other users in addition to broadcasters, too, (wireless telegraphy, for example) whose interests needed protection. As radio caught on, politicians became increasingly aware also of the latent, intangible influence of the medium and its possible danger if unchecked. This danger might be greatest in the government's hands. A third principle, firmly established by the Crawford Committee, was that the public monopoly should be run at arm's length from the government. The private monopoly of radio set manufacturers, set up in 1922 from the applicants for government broadcasting licences, was turned into a public monopoly: the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The point about a public corporation was its midway status between the politicians and their civil servants on the one hand and the people running the broadcast services day to day on the other. It was a quintessential institution of British government: its success depended upon informal, tacit habits and understandings, rooted in the shared values and experiences of an educated class, more than on legal forms and niceties. In this it resembled the British constitution itself, which, as apologists delight in explaining to foreigners, is nowhere embodied in a single document having the force of law.

For the BBC, the government, in the person of the responsible Minister, (the Postmaster-General in 1945, as in 1926) appointed the seven Governors, set the licence fee and retained certain general powers. In theory its powers went no further. In practice, however, the BBC's position was epitomized in the government's power to require or ban the broadcast of any specific matter. This was the authority for the general ban on BBC 'editorializing' and on party political broadcasts outside the annual series agreed with the BBC. It was used in 1955 to enforce the

'Fourteen-Days rule', which the BBC wanted to abandon, about broadcasting matters due for debate in Parliament. Most recently and controversially, it was used in October 1988 to ban the voices (but not the actual words) of Irish extremists – in practice, mainly republicans. The ban was lifted in September 1994, as part of the Northern Irish peace process. (The same ban was imposed on ITV under the powers of the 1981 Broadcasting Act.) If this general power had been used more often, politicians and broadcasters alike would have regarded that as evidence not of the system's success but of its failure. Programmes likely to produce such action ought, rather, to be spotted within the BBC in advance and either adjusted suitably or else supported by the Governors in such a way that the politicians would be quietly told, in effect, that if they wished to object they risked on this occasion a larger row than they might want.

As intermediaries, the members of the public corporation – the Governors, who legally *were* the BBC – thus faced both ways. They shielded the broadcasters from outside pressure – from all directions, not just from the politicians – and they reviewed the broadcasters' work, explaining, justifying and sometimes excusing it to government and the public. This did not mean sitting on the fence but, in theory, jumping to and fro. In practice, it meant protecting the broadcasters from politicians and pressure groups more than the other way round. Pressure generally came at moments of crisis, such as Suez in 1956 or the Irish conflict in the 1970s and 1980s, and tended to focus on particular programmes. This meant that details of the Governors' procedures, which might seem unimportant to outsiders – such as whether they watched a contested programme in advance of its first transmission – sometimes had great symbolic importance for the broadcasters.

The BBC was not the first public corporation and by no means the last. As a device for separating 'general matters of policy' from 'day to day administration' it seemed a comfortable way of combining public accountability with business efficiency in a parliamentary system of government: Ministers dealt with the former and the corporation's employees with the latter. Public utilities such as electricity supply and London Transport were put under public corporations between the wars, and they were the standard form of nationalization in the Attlee government for railways, air and freight transport, coal and steel. Few of these, from the vantage point of 1995, flourished as corporations so

successfully as the BBC, which gained a reputation as one of the great creations of social and cultural policy in the twentieth century.

A public corporation managing a monopoly might do so in a sectional interest. A fourth 'public service' principle was that the BBC should be, in the Crawford Committee's words, 'trustee for the national interest'. Radio must serve the interests of everyone, not of particular religions, regions or social and economic groups, and it could best do this if not subject to the direct control of a ministry. The Governors were to represent a broad cross-section of the public.

Consistent with the 'national interest' idea was a fifth principle, about the key matter of finance. Rather than concentrate the raising of revenue at the production end of the broadcasting process, by selling airtime to advertisers, the Sykes Committee recommended raising it by charging a flat rate annual licence fee to the consumer. This was considered fairer because the amount of advertising time would be small and expensive, which could favour the wealthiest clients. The size of the fee was set and reviewed periodically by the government, for whom it was a useful source of leverage in the informal manoeuvrings typical of government – broadcaster relations. For the broadcasters, the licence fee had the advantage too of being an assured and predictable form of income.

A sixth principle, more easily taken for granted by audiences, perhaps, than the others, was geographical 'universality of service'. Wherever people lived, they had an equal right to receive programmes, just as the BBC's parent department, the Post Office, delivered the mail to the remotest communities. This would have meant little if the charge to the receiver reflected the true cost of delivery, so the flat rate licence fee was an important element in 'universality'.

These principles chiefly concerned broadcasting organization, and the organization, of course, was designed to achieve complementary public service goals. In these, one is dealing with programme content and specifically with a certain kind of programme quality. The word 'service' here needs emphasizing, too, for while it is simple to establish that the law requires the appointment of twelve Governors and that twelve have been appointed, a broadcasting service is organic, extensive, continuous – and difficult to evaluate.

Applied to broadcast programmes, then, the public service principles were in the nature of flexible guidelines. Their practice felt the stamp of personalities, starting with the formidable John Reith. Reith's domina-

tion of the BBC as first Director-General (i.e. chief executive) until 1937 is well described as 'massive, totalitarian and idiosyncratic, and for many decades the traditions of the BBC seemed to flow directly from his personality' (Curran and Seaton, 1991, p. 132). Reith's notion of public service was rooted in a strict sense of selfless moral rectitude, derived from Scottish presbyterian values. Sir William Haley, Director-General from 1944 to 1952, was a self-made man whose career started as a telephonist on *The Times*, and he had much of Reith's commitment to the enlightening and educative value of broadcasting. But he failed to appreciate the potential of television. Another Director-General whose vision of broadcasting had a major influence in a period of important change in social attitudes was Hugh Greene, who oversaw a more liberal interpretation of 'public service' in the 1960s.

Obviously the stamp of personality was felt at all levels of the BBC. Official committees of enquiry tended to duck the task of too detailed an account of the stuff of public service, falling back on the Pilkington Committee's observation that 'good broadcasting is a practice not a prescription' (Pilkington, 1962, p. 12). The principles were encapsulated in the requirement that public service broadcasting should 'inform, educate and entertain'. Those words, and in that order of priority, were included in the BBC charter (and were passed on to ITV in much the same form in 1955).

The particular order of priority avoided, firstly, the risk of simply 'giving the audience what it wants' and settling at a lowest common denominator of taste. The stress on 'information' justified, in due course, strong news services, documentaries and international coverage. Education meant infinitely more than good schools programmes; a whole approach, rather, to broadcasting as a means of widening horizons, opening doors, increasing awareness – all the well meant speech-day clichés of the educationist, working with the privilege of experience and knowledge and with a sense of responsibility for the improvement of those they serve.

Information does not properly inform unless it is accurate. Principle, as well as expediency, therefore ensured that public service broadcasting was to be impartial. This meant both that the BBC itself was not to 'editorialize' about the news (or 'matters of public policy', as the Postmaster-General put it in 1927) and that it kept strict control over access to the airwaves. As the Annan Committee pointed out, the public

service principles, and the BBC's position as 'trustee for the national interest', did not mean 'that anyone with a claim to broadcast had a right to broadcast. They do not give the press or the universities or the churches the right to broadcast respectively the programmes on the news, education or religion, or to determine how they should be broadcast' (Annan, 1977, p. 9). The same principle meant that in theory, too, there was no subject about which the broadcasters might not make a programme, if they judged it right.

These kinds of argument could be almost infinitely refined. In practice, they were inevitably contestable. How did you recognize and measure impartiality? Who should be excluded from the air? Was it 'against the national interest' to have very many foreign programmes? What was the right balance between creativity and innovation on the one hand and familiarity and repetition on the other? The refinements also had to cover the new forms of broadcasting. Once ITV started, rules about advertisements were needed, concerning length, frequency, position in schedules, content and so on. What about the question of foreign ownership of ITV companies, too? (Not permitted, was the answer.)

Later chapters indicate how some such questions were answered. The answers naturally varied. But the essence of 'public service' practice was the broadcasters' day to day independence. However much encumbered by advisory councils, complaints commissions and the shifting apparatus of consultation and audience research, the broadcasters' own judgement about programme standards and quality – what it meant to inform, educate and entertain – prevailed.

The greatest challenge to the continuing applicability of public service principles to broadcasting structure and content (at least until the Peacock Committee period) was not the arrival of TV itself, which slid comfortably into the BBC system in 1946, where it had started 10 years earlier, but the Churchill government's decision to introduce a second TV network in 1955. It was to be financed by advertising revenue, but was it best described as 'commercial' or as 'independent', as complementary to the BBC or as competitor?

The direct competition with the BBC was for the audience. This did indeed run counter to the original principle of a benign public monopoly. If the BBC really was being run in the 'national interest', what benefit could competition bring? The idea that competition for audience share would be *virtuous* was thus an innovation. On the other hand, it did not

necessarily contradict the public service principles, especially as the new Act of Parliament obliged ITV to 'inform, educate and entertain' according to the same standards. Along with them went the baggage of impartiality, high quality, good taste and decency. In news programmes, quality and range were sought by setting up a distinct company, ITN, which was jointly owned by the other companies and supplied news for the whole channel, and later for Channel 4.

Competition for finance did not in theory exist, since the BBC's licence fee was untouched by the new system. In practice, however, the BBC knew that as its audience share fell, the case for a compulsory fee would become weaker and that getting the fee raised at the regular three-yearly review would be trickier (no government was going to win votes by raising the licence fee, even during the years of monopoly). The popularity of programmes therefore did become a factor in BBC calculations in a qualitatively different way from previously.

But what of the very idea of advertising in a public service system? The Beveridge Committee, which reported shortly before the Churchill government took office in 1951, saw no conflict. It drew a parallel between broadcast advertising and the advertising columns of the press, which did not (or need not) affect editorial independence. 'Slots' – spot advertisements – were the form chosen for ITV. Although the ITV companies sold them and collected the revenue, their frequency, duration and content were regulated by the supervising body, the Independent Television Authority. In this way the influence of revenue source over programme content was minimized.

At the top, ITV organization followed public service principles closely. The ITA was a public corporation like the BBC, with a small group of Governors and comparable (though not identical) intermediary functions of oversight and control. But where the BBC Governors appointed a Director-General to run the service, the ITA selected companies from competing applicants and awarded franchises to run the service in different geographical regions, subject to meeting the ITA's programme standards. The franchises initially lasted seven years. The ITA also owned the transmitters, for which the companies paid a rent.

The other supposedly distinctive feature of ITV, along with advertising revenue, was the principle of regionalism. This fitted perfectly well into the public service world, but in practice it was considerably diluted for viewers by the networking arrangements of the four (later five) larger

companies. These were guaranteed a national, not just a regional, showing for their programmes for a number of peak hours each week.

The case against ITV had initially to be made against something that did not yet exist. Much was therefore made of the horrors of American TV – again, by hearsay, since the BBC did not show the worst American TV programmes and none of the ads. The pernicious influence of sponsorship on content may have been a fact in the States but was irrelevant to the proposed British system. Arguments about the more intangible effects on 'quality' of the need to generate large audiences to provide enough advertising revenue, and of the intrusion of the profit motive in general, appealed to people's broader social and political prejudices. But obviously they cut no ice with a Conservative government that was busy dismantling wartime controls and reviving the notion of 'choice' in people's everyday lives.

So ITV was 'commercial'; but was it 'independent'? Hardly, except from the BBC; and perhaps the word might fairly be used to describe the divorce of advertisers from programme makers. Was it complementary or competitive with the BBC? ITV in fact was both. Initially it seemed more competitive. The BBC was the public service broadcaster: ITV was the commercial broadcaster. The BBC Director-General Hugh Greene was scathing in 1960 about an ITA claim to the public service label. Only with the passage of time did the two channels come to be seen widely as part of a *single* public service system. In particular the idea of competition for audiences but not for revenue seemed increasingly an expression of the British genius for making practical contraptions which then turn into beautiful machines. Competition, feared at first for its degenerative effects on programme quality, was rationalized as consistent with public service principles, because it was not driven by competition for a single source of revenue, as in the USA, but ensured a proper sensitivity to audience needs. Each system enjoyed what Reith in the beginning regarded as one of the public service essentials – assured finance.

The introduction of BBC2, Channel 4 and local radio posed no such challenges to the public service ideas. But breakfast time TV provides a footnote. The BBC started its own cut-price breakfast time service because of, and just before, ITV's TV-AM. This was, in part at least, in pursuit of the idea that 'if it's broadcasting, then the BBC does it' (even if someone else does too). Similarly, the BBC felt that it should have a stake in the (abortive) satellite plans of the early 1980s. These were

echoes of the old days – of the BBC as a public service broadcasting system in itself. By the time of the changes introduced for the 1990s, they had died away.

A careful distillation of the principles of public service broadcasting submitted by the Broadcasting Research Unit to the Peacock Committee in 1985 showed that the old values that were in place in 1945 could still be made to fit the diverse and vastly changed system forty years on. In structure, the main difference was that advertising, once grudged, was now embraced. In programming, the shifts were of emphasis – towards the needs of minorities, for example – that reflected the different society and culture of 1980s Britain and that took a pluralist not a paternalist view of the meaning of 'service'. The benign monopoly had become a benign duopoly.

The BRU summed up the principles in eight points. They claimed broadcast programmes should be available to everybody ('geographic universality'), should cater for all interests and tastes, and should make particular provision for minorities (especially the disadvantaged). Broadcasters should 'recognise their special relationship to the sense of national identity and community', should be distanced from all vested interests, particularly the government, and should be 'liberated rather than restricted' by the public guidelines for broadcasting. One main broadcasting organization should continue to be funded by 'the corpus of users' (that is to say, the licence fee, or something like it), and broadcasting should be structured so as to encourage competition in good programming rather than for audience numbers (BRU, 1985).

Could these principles be expected to survive into the 1990s, or had they outlived their time? Traditionalists had two grounds for scepticism. One was the onward drive of technology. Even without cable, satellite and digitization, the available number of terrestrial TV channels was making a nonsense of the historic principle that TV needed running as a publicly regulated monopoly/duopoly. Already with four channels, it was hard to defend the compulsory licence fee: people had a choice of channels without ever having to watch the BBC. For radio, defence would have been impossible long before 1990, and BBC radio became effectively free to the listener when separate radio licences were abolished in 1971.

The exploitation of technology was socially determined, as was well illustrated by the development of cable TV. The Thatcher government

decided in the early 1980s that this was to be 'entertainment led', which meant that private capital was to dig the holes and take the risks, rather than the public sector cabling the country in the (alleged) national interest. As a result, cable developed very slowly. This approach was typical of what many broadcasters and Thatcher opponents perceived as the Prime Minister's remorseless hostility to most of the public service broadcasting ethos. This was the second ground for scepticism about its survival. More than any predecessor, as should be clear from chapters 7, 8 and 9, the Thatcher government seemed ready to treat the BBC and IBA governors as political placemen and women; to interfere directly with programmes (such as *Real Lives*, a Northern Irish documentary [1985]); to accuse producers and interviewers of deliberate bias (including a ferocious attack by the senior Conservative minister Norman Tebbit on the BBC reporting of the American bombing of Libya in 1986); to impugn broadcasters' patriotism in the Falklands War of 1982 and their editorial judgement in 1988 (when the Irish 'broadcasting ban' was imposed); to see the Special Branch raid BBC offices in 1987, in search of tapes about a programme on missile systems; and to assume that the BBC was a smug, exclusive bureaucracy and that ITV was flush with cushy restrictive practices.

The standard Thatcher solutions were deregulation and competition. Just as the BBC had been a model public corporation, so the successors to John Reith should enter the market economy, along with gas, electricity, British Airways, and other former public corporations. Mrs Thatcher was said to have been struck when abroad by the much smaller size of TV crews than was necessitated by the restrictive practices of British unions. Having eased Rupert Murdoch's defeat of the print unions by sympathetic industrial relations laws, she planned next to set about the TV industry. She hoped, too, that the Peacock committee would recommend that at least part of the BBC – Radio 1, for instance – should be financed by advertising (an idea which the committee in fact rejected).

These attitudes came to fruition first in the reform of ITV, effected in the Broadcasting Act of 1990, along lines set out in a 1987 White Paper. The Act was passed under intense lobbying, whose scope was increased by the fact that by no means all the cabinet shared Mrs Thatcher's views, including Douglas Hurd and David Mellor, ministers in charge of broadcast policy. The differences were summed up in 'the

auction principle'. The Act embodied the unprecedented idea that ITV franchises should be allocated, on the basis of a sealed-bid auction, to whoever would pay the government the highest annual fee in return for the right to broadcast programmes and sell advertising. So obvious were the dangers to public service notions of quality (especially 'informing and educating'), that demands grew for protection. The solution was to strengthen the 'quality threshold' which applicants had to pass, in addition to the requirement to supply sufficient amounts of news, current affairs, regional, religious, educational and children's programmes. 'Quality' was construed not on a scale of highbrow/lowbrow but to include popular high rating programmes. Moreover the new Independent Television Commission, successor to the IBA, was given the power to ignore the highest bidder for a franchise if the programme quality of a competitor was 'substantially higher'. The ITC also had the power to fine companies three to five per cent of their annual revenue, if they failed to fulfil their programme undertakings. (The power was first used in December 1994, when Granada was fined £500,000 for breaching the sponsorship rules in an edition of *This Morning*.) In such ways the possibility of winning a franchise by producing cut-price programmes and paying a big fee to the Treasury was greatly reduced.

Amendments to the Broadcasting Bill during its passage through Parliament took account to some extent, then, of the worst carpet-biting of the public service traditionalists. But they were only emollients – in truth a set of awkward compromises. The ITC calculated, after the first year of the new system, that companies' rental payments equalled the cost of running an entire TV channel the size of Channel 4 – money which otherwise could have been available for services to their viewers. The Act gave the new ITC a 'light touch' compared with the IBA. Its powers over programme content would be weaker and partly retroactive. Franchises would last ten years, not seven, and with possible extension for a further ten. The power to ban the takeover of franchise-holders was removed. Companies were allowed to own more than one franchise, if the regions were not adjoining or not large. (Nine were classified as large and six as small.) Newspapers, as before, were barred from owning more than 20 per cent of at most one franchise, and broadcasters were limited to 20 per cent of a newspaper group. A new terrestrial Channel 5, financed by advertising, was to be set up when technically practical. (After one false start, the franchise went to a group of existing

broadcasters, including Pearson and MAI, in 1995.) Independent Television News, formerly a near-monopoly news provider owned jointly by the franchise companies, was to have 51 per cent of its shares dispersed and to be open to wider competition. Independent production companies, a rapidly growing group, were to provide at least 25 per cent of programmes. Channel 4 would in future sell its own advertising (previously sold by the ITV companies); but its freedom to make unpopular programmes was safeguarded by the provision of a safety net subsidy from the companies. The ban on religious advertising and on religious ownership of cable channels was lifted. A cautious form of advertising sponsorship of programmes would be permitted.

In the mid-to-late 1980s there had been a real chance that the BBC might be substantially privatized and eventually left with a narrow range of services. But government plans took shape only after the departure of Mrs Thatcher in November 1990, and the Major administration proved friendlier. (The Prime Minister went out of his way to praise BBC coverage of the 1991 Gulf War, for instance.) Unplanned ministerial reshuffles added a spice of uncertainty, but it became clear quite early that the licence fee, the foundation of the BBC edifice, would not be abolished. To outsiders, the arguments then seemed to concentrate as much among the broadcasters themselves as between the broadcasters and the politicians. The BBC's objective was to win renewal of its Charter in 1996 by reforming itself beforehand along lines which the government was likely to approve. The agent was John Birt; his instrument, 'Birtism'. (His predecessor as Director-General was Michael Checkland, under whom it seems phonetically improbable that the same policy would have been dubbed 'Checklandism'.) Opponents said Birt was doing the government's dirty work for it. Old BBC hands, ranging from the playwright Dennis Potter to the India correspondent Mark Tully, fulminated on public platforms about the stifling of creativity and the destruction of values.

In its discussion document, *Extending Choice*, published alongside a government Green Paper which endorsed the licence fee in 1992, the BBC smoothly defined its ambition for the era of broadcasting plenty. Four roles were stressed: high quality news and information, stimulating entertainment and culture, strong educational programmes, and the development of World Service TV (BBC Worldwide) and international co-production. At the heart of the reorganization simultaneously put in place – accompanied by morale-sapping job cuts, one-day strikes,

external recruitment to senior positions and jarring private sector management-speak – lay 'producer choice'. This was a free-market system of programme-making introduced in 1993, in which producers shopped around for their needs within the BBC and outside. Birtists claimed it saved millions of pounds which were fed back into programmes. Critics found it bureaucratic and distracting. But it helped to convince the government that the Birtist BBC meant business (more literally than traditionalists liked). Staff, for example, shrank by 5,000 to 20,500 during five years. The government's 1994 White Paper, renewing the BBC Charter for ten years from 1996, was thus a victory for the BBC. It stated plainly that the BBC should remain a public service broadcaster, with its previous full range of activities and with commercial enterprises supplementing the licence fee. Among these, BBC Worldwide clearly had great prospects. To supplement existing services to Asia, Africa, Canada and Europe, two new channels were launched early in 1995 – a 24-hours news service, BBC World, funded by advertising, and an entertainment service, BBC Prime, funded by subscription. These were the first fruits of a collaboration on satellite-delivered services with Pearson, arranged in 1994.

But how far would the custodians of the old benign duopoly recognize public service principles in the reformed system of terrestrial television? Universality within duopoly was giving way to universality through plurality (if at all). This distinction is best shown by the example of niche channels. In duopoly days, BBC and ITV each provided something for everybody – sport, news, film, soaps – within their respective two channels. In the new multi-channel world, viewers could subscribe to satellite and cable services giving whole channels devoted exclusively to such subjects. Channel 4 still had its remit to cater for minorities. The sense of national identity and community was recognized in the 1990 Broadcasting Act, somewhat sentimentally, by a clause preventing certain listed events such as Wimbledon and the FA Cup Final from being broadcast on a channel accessible only by subscription. Despite such sugar plums, opponents feared that the new system would push down production budgets; gradually drive out minority programmes and 'serious' projects; subject ITV to the needs of advertisers more than before; and force the BBC down market to maintain its audience share. The system might restrict, not liberate – viewers, as well as broadcasters – and place ratings and rubbish above quality and range.

The new system, in addition, would weaken the principle of assured finance, as competition for advertising revenue grew, and as enterprises such as co-production and BBC Worldwide provided a progressively greater proportion of BBC revenue. Maintenance of the compulsory BBC licence fee surely could not be relied upon, beyond the early years of the next century. What if anything would then differentiate the BBC from any other broadcaster in the marketplace; and what would be the logic of its particular set of businesses?

Above all, the new arrangements for BBC and ITV took little account, directly at least, of the growth of satellite broadcasting. They were outdated virtually as they were enacted, for the biggest challenge of all to national government broadcasting policy in the 1990s – especially at the level of detail symbolised by rules about sporting events – was that broadcasting was increasingly an international (or non-national) activity. Satellite footprints were no respecters of geo-political boundaries. In the same way, it was difficult in practice to bend those who used the satellites, like Ted Turner of CNN and Rupert Murdoch of BSkyB, to national policies, especially when they owned vast trans-national empires. Public service broadcasting, if it survived in a recognizable form at all, might revert to being just one part of the great ramifying broadcasting complex.

Radio

Of all the major media, radio had the most varying fortunes between 1945 and 1995. The BBC emerged from the war with immense prestige and popularity. For the next 10 years it basked in its monopoly, with radio still supreme, as TV came slowly out of the shadows. The rude intrusion of ITV in 1955 changed all that. Radio now was becalmed, for another 10 years. Then it was noisily invaded by the pirates of Radio Caroline, illegally broadcasting pop music offshore in the North Sea. The BBC reorganized its channels, took the pirate disk jockeys on board the new Radio 1 and entered the 1970s with little of the direct Reith influence remaining.

In the 1970s, local radio was greatly expanded, and a pattern was set. Technical developments made possible both a greater variety and quality of signals and also more convenient ways of listening. The transistor transformed the portable radio, culminating in the spectacle – bizarre if

it had been witnessed 20 years earlier – of people going around with earphones and Walkmans. Car radios also proliferated. Obviously radio would never recover the prominence of the post-war years, but it successfully re-established itself as meeting a need complementary to TV, whether judged by audience figures or by advertising revenue. A word such as 'moribund', used by Annan to describe its position in the late 1950s, was no longer remotely appropriate. By the mid-1990s radio was everywhere. There were five BBC stations; three national and five regional commercial stations, plus the popular Dublin-based Atlantic 252; and omnipresent commercial and BBC local radio.

Before the war the BBC ran two stations, one of which included regional programmes. One of these became the General Forces Programme, which soon provided the light entertainment and relaxation which the Forces clearly wanted and which were easily justified by their importance to morale. The 'home front' had similar needs, met by shows like *Workers' Playtime*. This was geared to communal audiences, such as factory workers, who wanted background listening, and it was broadcast from the factory floor. The second station, the Home Service, was more 'serious': for example it carried the main news bulletins that naturally attracted huge wartime audiences. The war also saw the BBC staff more than double in size, from about 5,000 in 1938 to 11,000 in 1946. The increase no doubt contributed to the Beveridge Committee's attitude five years later that the organization was bureaucratic, top heavy and over-centralized in London.

The BBC's pre-war conception of the audience had been more like that of someone reading a book – a deliberate and solitary or individual habit, though it may be done in company – than of a collective social entity. This fitted in with the idea of mixed programming, whereby music, talks, variety and drama appeared on each station, exposing the listener to a varied choice, rather than the stations being specialized. This policy was broadly retained after the war, but with the populist elements intact. *Workers' Playtime* continued for many years. The Forces Programme was renamed the Light Programme in 1945, 'designed to appeal not so much to a certain class of listener – but to all listeners when they are in certain moods' (BBC, 1946, p. 53). The Home Service remained, with regional variations, and a new station was launched in 1946. This was the Third Programme, brainchild of the Director-General, William Haley, though really pure Reith in character. Haley cheerfully explained,

Table 4.1 BBC/ITV Governors and Directors-General

Date of appointment	*BBC chairman*	*Main/previous occupation*	*Total governors*	*Director-General*
1939	Sir A. Powell	Administrator	7[a]	
1944				W. Haley
1947	Lord Inman	Businessman		
1947	Lord Simon of Wythenshawe	Engineer/politician		
1952	Sir A. Cadogan	Diplomat	9	Sir I. Jacob
1957	Sir A. fforde	Lawyer/headmaster		
1959				H. C. Greene
1964	Lord Normanbrook	Civil servant		
1967	Lord Hill of Luton	Conservative politician	12	
1968				C. Curran
1973	Sir M. Swann	Academic		
1977				I. Trethowan
1980	G. Howard	Landowner/businessman		
1982				A. Milne
1983	S. Young	Accountant		
1986	M. Hussey	Businessman		
1987				S. Checkland
1992				J. Birt
	ITA/IBA/ITC Chairman[b]			
1954	Sir K. Clark	Art historian/ administrator	10	Sir R. Fraser
1957	Sir I. Kirkpatrick	Diplomat		
1963	Lord Hill of Luton	Conservative politician		
1965			12	
1967	Lord Aylestone	Labour politician		
1970				B. Young
1975	Lady Plowden	Educationist		
1981	Lord Thomson of Monifieth	Labour politician		
1982				J. Whitney
1989	G. Russell	Industrialist		
1991			10	D. Glencross

[a] The number of governors was raised from 5 to 7 in 1937.

[b] The ITA was renamed the Independent Broadcasting Authority in 1972, when it took responsibility for independent local radio. In 1991 it became the Independent Television Commission and a separate body was set up for independent local radio.

Sources: Various.

as no successor could have dared after, say, 1965, that he saw society as a cultural pyramid, slowly aspiring upwards. He himself had aspired with eminent success: the conception was a self-educator's dream. The Third was a highbrow station, with a tiny proportion of the audience.

In these final years of radio prominence in the late 1940s and early 1950s, then, listeners had a choice of three BBC stations, including some regional variation. A part-time chairman of governors was assisted by other part-timers (table 4.1 lists the chairmen, the directors-general and the number of governors, and their counterparts at the IBA, for the years 1945–95). Inflation was comparatively low and the licence fee, swelled by the increasing income from the separate TV licence, did not need to be raised often in order to provide an adequate income. Revenue would be more of a problem in the future. Table 4.2 shows the changes in the licence fee for the whole post-war period. In the later decades it was raised more often. The gradual eclipse of radio is shown by the growth in the number of TV licence holders, until the separate radio licence was abolished in February 1971. Other ways in which the eclipse can be measured are the changing numbers of radio and TV staff (table 4.3) and the changing ratio of expenditure (table 4.4).

The Third Programme's elitist appeal (as it would now be called) to a minority 'whose tastes, education and mental habits enable them to take pleasure in close and responsive listening to broadcasts of artistic and intellectual distinction' (Annan, 1977, p. 12) was so limited that in 1957 it was confined to weekday evenings and weekends from 2.30 onwards. The rest of the time it was called Network 3, broadcasting specialist but less arcane programmes – on gardening, religion, music and so on. In 1964 'serious' music took over altogether and daytime Network 3 was renamed the Music Programme.

In 1964 too the first pirate, Radio Caroline, hove to in a ship just outside UK territorial waters off the Thames Estuary. It was soon followed by others. The pirate image was entirely fair. They broadcast on wavelengths allocated by international agreement and national laws to other services (in other countries, not just Britain), including maritime communications. They 'stole' the pop music that they broadcast by ignoring the law about royalties. The audience was their treasure, and they delivered it to their backers, the advertisers. There was even a buccaneering Robin Hood element, in that their programmes had a genuine popular appeal.

Table 4.2 Radio and TV licences: numbers and fees at selected dates[a]

		Radio		*Combined radio and TV*			
Date	*Total licences (thousands)*	*Licences (thousands)*	*Fee (£)*	*Black & white (thousands)*	*Fee (£)*	*Colour (thousands)*	*Fee (£)*
1945	9,710	9,633	0.50				
1946	10,396	10,348	1.00		2.00		
1947	10,778	10,713		15			
1948	11,180	11,082		45			
1950	12,219	11,819		344			
1952	12,754	11,244		1,449			
1954	13,437	10,126		3,249	3.00		
1955	13,980	9,414		4,504			
1957	14,525	7,496		6,966	4.00		
1959	14,736	5,423		9,255			
1961	15,177	3,858		11,268			
1963	15,699	3,213		12,443			
1965	16,047	2,759	1.25	13,253	5.00		
1966	16,178	2,580		13,567			
1968	17,646	2,530		15,068			10.00
1969	17,960	2,439		15,397	6.00		11.00
1971	15,943	–[b]	–[b]	15,333	7.00	610	12.00
1973	17,125	–	–	13,793		3,332	
1975	17,701	–	–	10,120	8.00	7,580	18.00
1977	18,056	–	–	8,098	9.00	9,958	21.00
1978	18,149	–	–	7,100	10.00	11,049	25.00
1979	18,381	–	–	6,250	12.00	12,131	34.00
1981	18,667	–	–	4,888	15.00	13,780	46.00
1983	18,494	–	–	3,796		14,699	
1985	18,716	–	–	2,896	18.00	15,820	58.00
1987	18,953	–	–	2,414		16,539	
1988	19,354	–	–	2,220	21.00	17,134	62.50
1989	19,584	–	–	1,945	22.00	17,638	66.00
1990	19,812	–	–	1,695	24.00	18,117	71.00
1991	19,722	–	–	1,448	25.50	18,247	77.00
1992	20,310	–	–	1,247	26.50	19,063	80.00
1993	20,506	–	–	1,059	27.50	19,447	83.00
1995[c]	20,727	–	–	766	28.00	19,961	84.50

[a] Includes alternate years and dates when the licence fee was changed. Total includes free licences for blind persons up to 1971, excluded from righthand columns.

[b] Radio licences were abolished on 1 February 1971.

[c] At end of April.

Source: BBC.

Table 4.3 BBC staff: radio and television

	1962		*1967*		*1988*		*1992*	
	(no.)	*(%)*	*(no.)*	*(%)*	*(no.)*	*(%)*	*(no.)*	*(%)*
Radio	5,650	39	5,600	29	6,618	28	6,207	29
Television	8,700	61	13,675	71	17,272	72	15,353	71

Source: BBC Handbooks and Annual Report

Table 4.4 BBC expenditure on radio and television

Year	*Radio (m)*	*Television (m)*	*Ratio (%)*
1955–56	10.9	7.0	61:39
1960–61	12.6	18.0	41:59
1965–66	17.1	38.5	31:69
1970–71	24.6	68.4	26:74
1975–76	52.4	131.8	28:72
1980–81	116.2	300.1	28:72
1985–86	225.2	582.1	28:72
1990–91	303.0	922.0	25:75
1993–94	341.0	1,073.0	24:76

Source: A. Briggs, *The First Fifty Years* (Oxford University Press, 1985); BBC Handbooks and Annual Report.

The Labour government was bound to take action: indeed there was a coordinated response through the Council of Europe. In 1967 the appropriately schoolmarm-sounding Marine & Broadcasting (Offences) Act banned the placing of advertising with the pirates. Equally, though, a Labour government could not ignore the public demand, and the BBC was authorized to provide a 'continuous popular music programme' on a medium wave frequency used by the Light Programme. So in September 1967 came 'wonderful' Radio One, with its patter and jingles that sounded like ads but were not ads. The other services were named Radios 2, 3 and 4.

Radio 1 was the most complete form of specialization on a radio station and the last before the BBC accepted that the Reith/Haley commitment to 'mixed' programming on each station simply did not correspond to listening preferences. In 1970, after the famous public row, Radio 1 stayed as an all-pop network, Radio 2 became exclusively 'light' music, Radio 3 (limited to VHF) provided 'serious' music by day and high culture by night. Radio 4 was for talk – news, current affairs, drama and

general entertainment. This system was described by the ungainly name 'generic broadcasting', and it survived, with changes of wavelength and broadcast hours, throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It was also accompanied by a large expansion of programme output, which nearly doubled between 1962 and 1975.

In August 1990 the BBC launched a new station, Radio 5. It had a shaky and obscure start, offering an odd mixture of sport, education (adult and children's), regional, pop and youth programmes. Just as it seemed to be establishing a foothold, with a weekly audience of 4.3 million (compared to Radio 3's 3.2 million), it fell victim to plans for Radio 4. The BBC was determined to have a rolling news station, for which Radio 4 Longwave seemed most suitable. Radio 4 Longwave listeners rose spontaneously in anger. A Winchester schoolmaster, innocently offering himself on air as co-ordinator of objections, found himself deluged with thousands of letters. A genteel lobbying campaign succeeded. Radio 4 Longwave survived, and Radio 5 was relaunched in March 1994 as Radio 5 Live, with 'news and sport from the BBC 24 hours a day'.

This episode perhaps typified the uncertainties of radio scheduling in the 1990s, as listener choice expanded. When the BBC tried to reorientate Radio 1 towards young people and Radio 2 at their elders, not only did it lose veteran disc jockeys such as Steve Wright and Dave Lee Travis, but it lost one-quarter of its audience in eighteen months. Increasingly competition came from commercial radio both at national and local levels. Local radio was long established, but national competition, apart from Atlantic 252's varied diet of pop music (launched in Dublin in 1989), was introduced by the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Thus Classic FM's unstuffy, hum-along presentation of classical music successfully drew listeners from purist Radio 3 – and performers such as the *Gardeners' Question Time* team from Radio 4, after the BBC 'dug up' that programme's format. By 1995 Classic FM had 4.8 million listeners, twice the number of the sagging Radio 3 and the largest of any commercial station. Of the two other national commercial franchises, one went to Virgin, which concentrated on album rock music for the 20–45-years-old market. The other was required to be 51 per cent speech-based and was awarded to Talk Radio UK (which promised 97 per cent) and launched in 1995, aimed at a broadly similar age group. By the end of 1994 a broadcasting history landmark was reached, when commercial radio overtook for the first time the BBC's audience share.

Local radio had begun in the 1960s. The Pilkington Committee recommended a BBC monopoly, and in 1966 the government authorized an experiment on VHF with eight stations. Starting with Leicester, these were all on air by mid-1968 and 12 more were added before 1970. These reached a potential 70 per cent of the English population and were dotted in such obvious places as Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham – and London. Another 20 stations would have increased the range to 90 per cent. Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish radio already had a considerable local element.

The new Conservative government in 1970 had different ideas and not surprisingly favoured a competing set of commercial stations. To make room on the dial, various BBC medium frequencies were released. This meant the end, in 1972, of the old system of regional variations on the national radio network. The BBC's local stations were kept at 20, and the IBA was authorized to licence up to 60, reaching much the same total percentage audience. Capital Radio and LBC opened in London in October 1873 and 17 others quickly followed, chosen from more than 60 applicants.

A change of government produced a temporary halt, when Labour, who returned in February 1974, stopped further expansion until after the Annan inquiry. But under the Thatcher Government new franchises were again allocated and by 1987 49 ILR stations were covering about 85 per cent of the UK population. In that year stations began to split their services on the two frequencies each held (one FM, one AM), so the total number of stations began to rise further in that way. More important, however, was the boost given by the 1990 Broadcasting Act. This eased earlier restrictions on content, advertising and technical standards and made licences easier to apply for. The result was a rapid and steady expansion, marked also by such excitements as the failure of the London station LBC to win renewal of its two franchises. They went instead to London News Radio and were sold on to Reuters. By mid-1994, seven other licensees had also suffered LBC's fate. The overall result was that by 1995 there were more than 160 commercial stations, with more on the way. The list in table 4.5 can therefore be no more than a snapshot. The BBC, by contrast, had grown in the mid-1990s to the comparatively modest number of 38.

BBC local radio was a shoestring operation. As with any extra BBC service, it had to be financed out of existing revenue, for there was no separate licence fee or earmarked increase. ILR, of course, depended on

Table 4.5 BBC and Independent Local Radio stations: launch dates

Year	*BBC*	*ILR*
1967	Leicester (Nov.); Sheffield (Nov.); Merseyside (Nov.)	
1968	Nottingham (Jan.); Sussex (Jan.); Stoke-on-Trent (Mar.); Leeds (Jun.)	
1970	Bristol (Sep.); Manchester (Sep.); London (Oct.); Oxford (Oct.); Radio WM (Birmingham) (Oct.); Kent (Dec.); Solent (Dec.); Cleveland (Dec.)	
1971	Newcastle (Jan.); Lancashire (Jan.); Humberside (Jan.); Derby (Apr.)	
1973		LBC (Oct.); Capital (Oct.); Clyde (Dec.)
1974		Birmingham (Feb.); Piccadilly (Manchester) (Apr.); Metro (Tyne & Wear) (Jul.); Swansea (Sep.); Sheffield (Oct.); City (Liverpool) (Oct.)
1975	Cumbria (Nov.)	Forth (Edinburgh) (Jan.); Plymouth (May); Tees (Jun.); Trent (Jul.); Bradford (Sep.); Portsmouth (Sep.); Orwell (Ipswich) (Oct.)
1976		Reading (Mar.); Belfast (Mar.); Wolverhampton (Apr.)
1980	Norfolk (Sep.); Lincolnshire (Nov.)	Cardiff (Apr.); Mercia (Coventry) (May); Hereward (Peterborough) (Jul.); Bournemouth (Sep.); Severn (Oct.); Tay (Oct); Devon (Nov.) Perth (Nov.)
1981		Aberdeen (Jul.); Aire (Leeds) (Sep.); Essex (Sep.); Chiltern (Luton) (Oct.); Ayr (Oct.); GWR (Bristol) (Oct.)
1982	Jersey (Mar.); Guernsey (Mar.); Cambridgeshire (May); Northampton (Jun.)	Inverness (Feb.); Moray Firth (Feb.); Wyvern (Hereford etc.) (Oct.); Red Rose (Preston & Blackpool) (Oct.); GWR FM East (Swindon) (Oct.); Saxon (Bury St. Edmunds) (Nov.)
1983	Devon (Jan.); Cornwall (Jan.); York (Jul.)	Guildford (Apr.); Newport (Jun.); Marcher (Wrexham) (Sep.); Signal (Stoke) (Sep.); Brighton (Sep.)
1984		Viking (Humberside) (Apr.); Leicester (Sep.); Invicta (East Kent) (Oct.); Norwich (Oct.); Mercury (Reigate) (Oct.)
1985	Shropshire (Apr.); Bedfordshire (Jun.)	Plymouth Sound (May)

Table 4.5 (*Continued*)

Year	*BBC*	*ILR*
1986	Essex (Nov.)	Northampton (Nov.); Ocean FM (Portsmouth) (Oct.)
1987		Ram FM (Derby) (Mar.)
1988	Gloucester (Oct.)	Piccadilly Key 103 FM (Manchester) Sep.) Gem AM (Nottingham & Derby) (Oct.) Brunel Classic Gold (Bristol) (Nov.) Capital Gold (London) (Nov.) Power FM (Portsmouth) (Dec.)
1989	Hereford & Worcester (Feb.) Wiltshire (Apr.)	WABC (Wolverhampton) (Jan.) Q 103 (Cambridge) (Feb.) MFM (Wrexham & Chester) (Mar.) Invicta SuperGold (Kent) (Mar.) Great North Radio (Tyne & Wear/Teesside) (Apr.) 1152 Xtra AM (Birmingham) (Apr.) Breeze (Southend) (Jul.) Fox FM (Oxford/ Banbury) (Sep.) Horizon Radio (Milton Keynes) (Oct.) London Talkback Radio (Oct.) London Greek Radio (Nov.) Sunrise Radio (London) (Nov.) Orchard FM (Yeovil/Taunton) (Nov.) Sunrise FM (Bradford) (Dec.)
1990	Suffolk (Apr.)	Borders (Jan.) Cool FM (Belfast) (Feb.) Signal Cheshire (Stockport) (Feb.) Choice FM (Brixton) (Mar.) JFM 102.2 (London) (Mar.) RTM (Thamesmead) (Mar.) KCBC (Kettering) (Apr.) Isle of Wight Radio (Apr.) Buzz FM (Birmingham) (May) Central FM (Stirling & Falkirk) (Jun.) Red Rose Gold (Preston) (Jun.) Red Rose Rock (Preston/Blackpool) (Jun.) South West Sound (Dumfries & Galloway) (May) Northants RadioSuperGold (Jun.) Spectrum Internation (London) (Jun.) Melody Radio (London) (Jul.) Magic 828 (Leeds) (Jul.) Touch AM (Cardiff/Newport) (Jul.) Chiltern Radio SuperGold (Luton) (Jul.) Chiltern Radio SuperGold (East) (Bedford) (Jul.) Radio Harmony (Coventry) (Aug.) 96.7 BCR (Belfast) (Sep.) Kiss 100 FM (Sep.) Mellow 1557 (Tendring) (Oct.) WABC (Shrewsbury) (Dec.)
1991	Southern Counties (Sussex and Surrey) Berkshire	Galaxy Radio (Bristol) (Jan.) SIBC (Shetlands) (Oct.) The Pulse (Bradford) (Oct.) South Coast Radio (Brighton)

	(Mar.) South Coast Radio (Portsmouth) (Mar.)
1992	Heartland FM (Pitlochry & Aberfeldy) (Mar.) Lincs FM (Mar.) 1332 WGMS (Peterborough) (Apr.) Pirate FM (Cornwall) (Apr.) Beacon Radio (Shrewsbury) (Jul.) RadioWave (Blackpool) (May) Radio Mercury FM (West) (Guildford) (May) Mercury Extra AM (Guildford) (May) Minster FM (York) (Jul.) KL.FM 96.7 (King's Lynn) (Jul.) Q96 (Paisley) (Sep.) Sunrise East Midlands (Sep.) Signal Gold (Staffs. & Ches.) (Sep.) Spire FM (Salisbury) (Sep.) Sunshine 855 (Ludlow) (Oct.) Channel 103 FM (Jersey) (Oct.) Island FM (Guernsey) (Oct.) Lantern Radio (N. Devon) (Oct.) Wear FM (Sunderland) (Nov.) Wey Valley 102 (Nov.) Radio Ceredigion (Dec.)
1993	Q102.9 (Londonderry) (Oct.) The Bay (Morecambe & South Lakeland) (Mar.) 603 Radio (Cheltenham) (Mar.) CFM (Carlisle) (Apr.) Star FM (Windsor) (May) Ten 17 (Harlow) (May) Radio Maldwyn (Montgomery) (Jul.) Marcher Coast (Aug.) Great Yorks. Gold (Sep.) Wessex FM (Sep.) SGR Colchester (Oct.) Yorkshire Coast Radio (Scarborough) (Nov.) 1170 AM (High Wycombe) (Dec.)
1994	Mercia Classic Gold (Coventry) (Mar.) Mix 96 (Aylesbury) (Apr.) Nevis Radio (Aug.) NECR (Aberdeen) (Jun.) Fortune 1458 (Manchester) (Jul.) Stray FM (Harrogate) (Jul.) Scot FM (Sep.) Century (North East) (Sep.) JFM 100.4 (North West) (Sep.) Heart FM (W Midlands) (Sep.) Country 1035 (London) (Sep.) Kiss 102 (Manchester) (Autumn) Supa AM (Birmingham) (Oct.) London News Radio (replacing LBC) (Oct.) London Newstalk Radio (replacing London Talkback Radio) (Oct.)
1995	Gemini AM (East Devon; replaces DevonAir) (Jan.) Turkish Radio (Haringey) (?) St Alban's & Watford BC (?) Gemini FM (same) (Jan.)

Source: BBC Annual Reports; Radio Authority, 1994. Some pre-1987 stations later split are listed only once.

the sale of 'spot' advertising, controlled by the IBA (renamed from ITA when its role was extended to radio) and by the Radio Authority after 1990. There was certainly a distinct local advertising market available to support it. But the revenue was not just there for the taking, and a station had to get its programming right to win the necessary audience. Even then, income was liable to fluctuate. Several stations had financial problems in their early days. Both Capital Radio and LBC in London, the former geared to pop music and the latter to talk, made near-disastrous starts and recovered under new Canadian ownership (a reflection of the north American style most appealing in local radio). At least three stations went bust, including the first community ethnic station, Sunset Radio, in 1993. Others, such as Invicta Radio in Kent, had to relaunch before getting firmly established.

With ILR the question of ownership arises once more. The idea of local radio fitted snugly with local ownership, like the provincial press. But comparison with the press cannot go very far. An individual might build a local paper from nothing and retain the ownership intact. The costs of ILR were different. They did not expand with the audience to the same extent as with a newspaper. Nor were newspapers controlled by a public authority and subject to competitive franchising. From the start, local radio companies had a fair spread of local investors. As they became established, shares in many of them became quoted on the Stock Exchange. This in principle dispersed ownership, though working against a local character.

ILR thus did not at first develop ownership chains like the local press. Broadcasting law influenced the pattern, too. No ITV company was allowed a controlling interest in an ILR station in the same area, and vice versa (though there could be joint directors). The IBA could regulate the extent of foreign ownership, and foreign (later defined as non-European Union) control was completely forbidden. For the rescue operations of Capital and LBC, for example, Canadian interests were preferred over US alternatives, which were reckoned incompatible with public service values.

The law initially gave local newspapers a privileged position, virtually prescribing an element of radio/press concentration. Papers with substantial circulation in ILR areas were guaranteed a shareholding if they wanted it and if the IBA felt their advertising revenue might be hit. The Annan Committee disliked this arrangement, for even the local newspaper publishers' association itself did not think the amount of advertising likely to go to ILR was great enough to be a threat. By 1988 several

Table 4.6 Press shareholdings in Independent Local Radio, 1976–87

Voting shares held by press (%)	*1976*	*1981*	*1987*
Nil	Bradford	–	Ayr; Red Rose; Tees; Wyvern
5	–	Bradford; Cardiff	Brighton; Chiltern; Marcher; Wolverhampton
5–10	–	Ayr; Bournemouth; Bristol	Bournemouth; Clyde; Guildford; Invicta; Liverpool; Mercury; Ocean; Trent
10–15	–	Aire; Gloucester; Aberdeen	Aberdeen; Belfast; Cardiff; Edinburgh; Essex; Gloucester; Inverness; Leicester
15–20	Belfast; Metro; Orwell; Trent	Belfast; Devon; Edinburgh; Hereward; LBC; Metro; Orwell; Swansea; Trent	Bristol; LBC; Norwich; Plymouth; Severn; Sheffield; Swansea; Viking
20–25	Birmingham; Capital; Edinburgh; LBC; Liverpool; Plymouth; Portsmouth; Sheffield; Swansea; Tees; Wolverhampton	Birmingham; Capital; Essex; Mercia; Plymouth; Portsmouth; Reading; Sheffield; Tees; Wolverhampton	Birmingham; Capital; Devon; Metro; Reading; Stoke
25–30	–	Liverpool	Aire; Orwell; Saxon
30–35	Clyde	Clyde	Hereward; Mercia; Piccadilly
35–40	Piccadilly	Piccadilly	–
40–45	–	Tay	–
45–50	Reading	–	–
Total	19	31	44

Names are mostly of locations, not stations. (See table 4.5).
Sources: Annan Committee; Press Council Annual Reports.

Table 4.7 Independent Local Radio stations: group ownership, 1994

Group	*Stations*
Capital Radio	BRMB-FM (Birmingham) Capital FM Capital Gold Invicta FM Invicta Super Gold Ocean FM Power FM South Coast Radio Southern FM Xtra AM
Capital Radio also owns 20% of Chiltern Radio Network.	
Chiltern Radio Network	Chiltern Chiltern Supergold Galaxy Horizon Northants Northants Supergold Severn Sound Severn Sound Supergold
EMAP	City FM City Gold Kiss 100FM
EMAP also owns 51% of TransWorld Communications.	
TransWorld Communications	Aire FM Magic 828 Piccadilly Gold Piccadilly Key 103 Red Dragon FM Red Rose Gold Red Rose Rock FM Touch AM
Metro Radio	Hallam FM Great North Great Yorkshire Metro FM The Pulse TFM Viking FM
GWR	Beacon Brunel Classic Gold CN FM Gem–AM GWR FM

	Hereward
	Isle of Wight
	KL FM
	Leicester Sound
	Mercia FM
	Mercia Classic Gold
	Ram FM
	1332
	Trent FM
	2CR FM
	2CR Classic Gold
	210 FM
	210 Classic Gold
	WABC

Source: Radio Authority.

of the 46 stations were 20–30 per cent owned by the press. Table 4.6 gives the details. Only one out of nineteen in 1976 had no press involvement at all, and four out of forty-five in 1987. The same names and groups that have already featured in the discussion of the provincial press therefore appear again as owners of local radio. This is true both of the small and narrower groups, such as the Eastern Counties group in East Anglia, or Portsmouth and Sunderland newspapers, larger groups such as EMAP and the national groups with major provincial holdings, such as the Westminster Press and Associated Newspapers.

The greatly expanded ILR world after 1990 required different rules. Non-EU nationals, local authorities, political, religious and advertising organizations remained ineligible to own stations. The number of stations one body could control was determined by a points system, based on the population of the licence areas. Nobody could control more than 15 per cent of the total points in the system, with a maximum of twenty stations. There were limits on the ownership of big ones, such that no one could have more than six licences serving areas with populations greater than one million. All these rules were relaxed in 1995. Thirty-five stations was the new maximum, and the government promised to remove even that before long. In addition, local newspapers were limited to 20 per cent holdings in licences covering their own areas, and local and national newspapers were limited to 20 per cent of a national station. There was no limit on the number of local licences in which a national newspaper could own less than 5 per cent. Nor was there anything to prevent a Channel 3 franchise holder also holding local radio licences.

By 1995 a number of large groups stood out from the smaller clusters (or clusters with numerous small holdings). They are listed in table 4.7. Longest in the field was Capital Radio, whose fortunes were founded on one of the original two London licences. The interlocking interests of media groups are well illustrated by the example of the Chiltern network. Its major shareholders were Lord Rothermere's Daily Mail group; Capital Radio; and MAI, the controllers of the Meridian and Anglia TV franchises.

The full picture of commercial radio ownership over a period of twenty-five years is difficult to trace. But clearly the stations were included within media conglomerates from the beginning, partly by design and partly by the natural interest of media investors. The great proliferation of stations in the 1990s, even if they still attracted only 3 per cent of national advertising spend, reinforced this tendency.

Television

The BBC had run a TV service from 1936 until 1 September 1939, two days before war broke out. By then, 23,000 people within range of Alexandra Palace in London had been able to watch Shakespeare, variety, the Derby and the return of the King and Queen from a visit to Canada.

There was never much doubt that TV would be regarded as an extension of radio. 'One thing cannot be stated too often,' wrote Sir William Haley, Director-General of the BBC in 1951, '. . . Television is an integral part of Broadcasting. The essence of Broadcasting is that it is a means of communication capable of conveying intelligence into every home simultaneously' (BBC, 1952, p. 9). A government committee under Lord Selsdon in 1935 had already affirmed this, when investigating the form TV development should take. An analogy with the film industry, or treatment as an entirely distinct medium requiring its own organization, was inappropriate. TV began, therefore, as part of the public service radio monopoly. 'The responsibilities are identical,' wrote Haley. 'The purpose should be the same.'

The broadcasters recognized, even so, that there were important differences, particularly in the costs of TV and in the way people might use it. In 1939 the estimated cost of producing an hour of TV was twelve times that of the most expensive radio programme. On the production

scale of 1962 it was still seven times as much, and in 1980, perhaps ten times (Tunstall, 1983, p. 34). This meant that within the BBC itself sources of finance beyond the licence fee were not ruled out altogether, nor by the Beveridge Committee in 1951.

As for audiences, 'viewing television is a very different activity from listening to sound broadcasts,' explained Maurice Gorham, the new head of BBC TV, in 1946 (BBC, 1946, p. 26). 'The radio set can remain on for hours at a time; you can enjoy it as background to reading, writing, homework, housework. . . . The television set demands your attention; you cannot enjoy television from the next room. You must sit facing the set, with the lights down or shaded, and if you are a normal viewer you will find yourself very reluctant to be disturbed during a programme that you enjoy.'

At first some 15,000 households seized the opportunity to sit in darkened rooms when the post-war service started in 1946. The government had started to take expert advice on how TV might be extended as early as 1943; so the BBC had the signal to go ahead almost as soon as the war ended. The Alexandra Palace transmitter gave a range of about forty miles, or 12 million people. New transmitters in Sutton Coldfield (1949), Holme Moss, near Huddersfield (1951), Kirk O'Shotts (1952) and Wenvoe soon extended the service to a potential 36 million, and by 1956 almost the whole population was included.

The actual audience, as table 4.2 showed, grew rapidly from its tiny base, partly in line with the new transmitters and partly with the sort of fillip provided by the Coronation. Initially, as Gorham's account suggests (with no exaggeration: the weak signal and eight-inch screen required the darkened room), watching TV was a fairly unsociable activity. Alternatively something of a ritual might be made of inviting friends round to watch a particular programme. The Coronation helped to make TV respectable, in addition to simply showing people its potential.

For nearly 10 years, then, BBC TV gradually established itself, with more programmes, more viewers and (rather slowly) more resources. In 1957–8 licence revenue from TV exceeded sound for the first time, and the following year TV expenditure overtook radio. In the early days, of course, radio listeners had heavily subsidized the generally more affluent TV watchers; while the richer parts of the country, following public service values, paid for the provision of the service to the remote and poorer parts.

Considering the engineering effort and investment, the necessary large-scale manufacture of TV sets, the lack of priority for TV inside the

BBC, and the shift in social habits involved, the growth of TV in a decade still pinched by post-war austerity was remarkably quick.

The origin of ITV can be explained in many ways: as a classic case (perhaps the first, post-war) of high pressure political lobbying; as Churchill's revenge on the BBC for its disdainful treatment of him during the 1926 General Strike and in his wilderness years in the 1930s, when he was largely kept off the air; or as part of the Conservative move to 'set the people free' from the bureaucracy and greyness allegedly intrinsic to Labour planning and the construction of the welfare state (sweets, be it remembered, did not finally come off ration until 1953).

The growth of TV at the BBC was stately compared with the hasty start of ITV. The ITA was simultaneously having to work out the details of its own role; formulate rules that met the legislation's requirements for quality, balance and so on, some of which – about imported American programmes, say – would affect the companies' finances; and ensure both that there was proper competition for the franchises, yet that the operation did not collapse through mismanagement or financial miscalculation.

The Television Act was passed in 1954 after great controversy, including a powerful attack by Lord Reith in the House of Lords. The first four contracts were awarded on 26 October. The London service went on air on 22 September 1955, with the Midlands in the following February and the Northern Region in May.

This haste carried risks. For example, Lord Kemsley, who had taken a 30 per cent interest in one of the successful bidders (and been a major factor in its success) decided subsequently to withdraw. The company collapsed, the ITA had to re-advertise the contract in July 1955, and the ABPC film company, one-third owned by the American Warner Brothers, was persuaded firmly to accept it the very day before ITV started in London.

Such episodes were a portent. In principle, the London Region included an estimated 13 million viewers, with 7.5 million in the Midlands and 12 million in the Northern. In practice, viewers preferred to wait and see – or rather wait for other people to see – before converting their TV sets to receive the new signal. ITV began with only some 3 per cent of households equipped to receive it. Yet to win the big audiences that would attract advertising, the companies had to spend large sums on attractive programmes. The result was a near disastrous first year.

The smaller, regional companies, that filled the gaps in the system between 1957 and 1962, escaped this traumatic experience and were able

to enjoy what Roy Thomson, owner of Scottish Television, unwisely described as a 'licence to print money'.

The Television Act intended competition between ITV companies, not just between ITV and the BBC – which was what effectively developed. Fraser assumed, indeed, that the government would by degrees allocate frequencies such that more than one ITV station would be able to broadcast in a given area. Not until the 1990s would this in fact happen. What Fraser and his colleagues decided to do, therefore, was try and introduce an element of competition first by dividing the three available stations – London, Midlands, Northern – 'vertically', and secondly to move programmes from station to station 'horizontally'. 'Vertical' competition meant giving weekday contracts to one company and weekend contracts to another. 'Horizontal' competition, the network system, might in an ideal world have meant companies vying to buy and sell the best programmes from each other. In practice it led to the 'carve-up' (described in more detail in chapter 6), whereby the four big companies (five, from 1968) were guaranteed national access for agreed amounts of their programmes, with the ITA/IBA controlling certain 'quality' aspects of content and the proportions of programme types (news, drama, and so on). By 1968 the franchise terms *obliged* the big five to produce network programmes.

The successful applicants accepted these offers of split contracts, though without massive enthusiasm. The financial interests thus gelled into four organizations that soon became instantly recognized household names and logos: Associated-Rediffusion, Associated Television (ATV), ABC Television and Granada. To provide a national and worldwide news service, the ITA set up Independent Television News, under the companies' joint ownership. Table 4.8 lists the original franchise holders and their successors, from 1955 to 1991 including the smaller companies that started slightly later.

Who provided the money and driving force? The combination of competition, regionalism, previous relevant experience and piety about public service values determined the pattern. It meant also that ITV companies were from the start a kind of conglomerate – by definition. The money had to come from somewhere, and while old newspapers might spawn new newspapers there was not, of course, any 'old' ITV.

One natural source of finance and experience was the world of show business – live theatre and cinema. This included 'talent' organizations

Table 4.8 ITV Channel 3 franchises: regions, companies and years awarded

Region	*Estimated population*[a] *(millions; 1991 in brackets)*	*1955 (or later start)*	*1964*	*1968*	*1982*	*1991*
Network companies						
London	12.9 (10.6)	Associated-Rediffusion (weekdays)	All companies were reappointed in 1964	Thames (ABC/AR merger)	same	Carlton
		Associated-Television (weekends)		London Weekend TV	same	same
Midlands	7.4 (9.2)	Associated-Television (weekdays) ABC Television (weekends)		Associated-TV (whole week)	Central TV	same
North	12.5 (6.3)	Granada TV (weekdays)		Lancs: Granada (whole week)	same	same
	(5.4)	ABC Television (weekends)		Yorks: Yorkshire TV (whole week)	same	same
'Regional companies'						
Central Scotland	4.0 (3.6)	Scottish Television (1957)		same	same	same
S. Wales and West	3.3 (4.3)	Television Wales and West (1958)		Harlech Television	same	same
Southern	4.3 (5.0)	Southern Television (1958)		same	Television South	Meridian
North East	2.7 (2.8)	Tyne Tees Television (1959)		same	same	same

East Anglia	2.6 (3.9)	Anglia Television (1959)		same	same	same
Northern Ireland	1.4 (1.4)	Ulster Television (1959)		same	same	same
South West	1.6 (1.5)	Westward (1961)		same	Television South West	Westcountry TV
Borders	0.5 (0.6)	Border Television (1961)		same	same	same
N. E. Scotland	0.9 (1.1)	Grampian Television (1961)		same	same	same
Channel Islands	0.1 (0.1)	Channel Television (1962)		same	same	same
West & N. Wales	1.0 (–)	Wales (West & North) TV (1962) merged with TWW		–	–	–
Breakfast channel		–	–	–	TVAM	Sunrise (GMTV)
Number of applications		25	22 (including 8 new)	36 (from 30 groups, including 17 new)	42	40 (from 39 groups)

[a] 1991 Population figures are for ITV regions.

Sources: B. Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain*, vol. I (Macmillan, 1982); various; ITC.

like those of Lew Grade (ATV) and Jack Hylton (TWW), and theatre and cinema chains (the latter much larger enterprises in the 1950s, obviously, than later, when so many became bingo halls instead). These included Howard and Wyndham (Scottish TV), Moss Empires and J Arthur Rank (Southern TV). Rank were also involved in film production: and a few other, much smaller film makers, such as Launder and Gilliat, took an interest too (TWW). Another obvious source was firms that had become wealthy through the hire of radio and TV sets – chief among them Rediffusion (Associated-Rediffusion).

Regional finance was strongly encouraged by the ITA, especially in the smaller companies. In the early days it was not always easily secured. TWW, for instance, with a base in Bristol, was part owned by the local Imperial Tobacco Company. TWW, in fact, was a good example of a consortium put together from interests reflecting the shape of the franchise area, which was partly dictated by the fact that the signal for Wales would also be picked up in the West Country.

'Regionalism' also meant the presence of local notables on the companies' boards, sometimes bringing finance with them, as in the case of Lord Derby, chairman of TWW, and sometimes prestige, contacts and local influence. Regionalism also overlapped with the very important question of newspaper finance. From the start this was bound to be contentious, for it tied in so obviously with concern about newspaper chains, the power of large circulations and the alleged dangers of a too one-sided party press. With Labour in opposition, and perhaps ready to dismantle ITV when back in office, the issue featured prominently during the passage of the Television Act in 1954.

Moreover it was a complex issue, rather than simply splitting opinion on party lines. The provincial press was a strong expression of regionalism. It competed with Fleet Street (with difficulty, as has been seen). To exclude it from ITV, its competitor for advertising revenue, might weaken it further. Yet the links between the provincial and the national press meant that it would be complicated, if not illogical, to allow investment by the former but not by the latter.

Involvement by the national press was thus the trickier issue for the ITA. They handled it initially by seeking political balance, hoping, for instance, that the *Manchester Guardian* would join a consortium to balance the Kemsley bid and the 50 per cent holding of the Conservative Associated Newspapers (*Daily Mail*) group in Associated-Rediffusion.

When Kemsley dropped out, the prospect of *News of the World* or Beaverbrook investment, also Conservative, was most unwelcome, and the Authority looked unsuccessfully for Odhams (*Daily Herald*), *News Chronicle* or *Daily Mirror* interest.

Cecil King, *Daily Mirror* chairman, preferred 'to wait until after the second bankruptcy'. The bankcruptcies did not happen, but he bought the *Daily Mirror* into ATV when bankruptcy looked possible, after the traumatic first year. ATV had run out of cash, as a result of large start-up costs, a delayed opening of its Midlands service and general under-capitalization. At about the same time (July 1956) Lord Rothermere decided to sell most of his 50 per cent *Daily Mail* stake in Associated-Rediffusion; and he sold the remainder when he took a third of the shares in the new South/South-East franchise holder, Southern TV, in 1958.

The Amalgamated Press, controlled by Lord Camrose, also had a third share in Southern. But almost immediately, Amalgamated was sold to the Mirror Group, which now had holdings in two companies – to which the ITA objected. King, therefore, sold the Southern shares to D C Thomson of Dundee – about as far removed from a 'regional' interest as could be imagined. Meanwhile the Central Scotland franchise (and 80 per cent of its voting shares, and all the non-voting) had gone to Roy Thomson, Canadian owner of *The Scotsman*.

The press element in ITV finance was thus significant in several ways. It was 'natural' and defensible, on the ground that one medium might reasonably seek to protect itself by investing in a competitor. It was contentious, because of the political implications and the potential for concentration. It fluctuated, through the manoeuvres of the press groups, and it tended to attract publicity. It was the subject of legislation in 1963 and of particular scrutiny whenever official inquiries into the press or broadcasting were set up.

As time went on, the ITA/IBA tried to reduce press holdings. The 1990 Broadcasting Act limited newspapers to a 20 per cent stake in TV companies. Table 4.9 summarizes the holdings at various dates across the period. Table 4.10 identifies them by newspaper group. The position is slightly complicated by the question what constitutes a 'press' company. British Electric Traction (BET), for example, was regarded as such by the Press Council and the 1974 Press Commission, but not initially by the ITA. BET had a major holding in Associated-Rediffusion. Apart

Table 4.9 Press holdings in ITV: summary of the percentage of voting shares held by press companies, from starting date

ITV company (starting date)	*At start*	*1961*	*1968*	*1976*	*1982*	*1987*	*1994*
Network companies							
ABC (1955)	–	–	[b]				
Associated-Rediffusion (1955)	75[a]	50[a]	[b]				
ATV (1955)	–	40	40(?)[c]	43	–[d]		
Granada (1956)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
LWT (1968)			22	32	32	•	–
Thames (1968)			50[a]	50[a]	50	29	
Yorkshire (1968)			18	18	35	21	14
Central (1982)					40	40	–
Carlton (1991)							5
GMTV (1991)							15
Meridian (1991)							–
Regional Companies							
Scottish (1957)	80	80	25[e]	25	–	–	20
Southern (1958)	62	62	62	62			
TWW (1958)	39	39					
Anglia (1959)	34	34	34	34	34	9	–
Tyne-Tees (1959)	21	21	?[f]	?[f]	7	–	14
Ulster (1959)	9	9	9(?)[c]	7	1	*	–
Border (1961)		39	39(?)[c]	43	40	21	18
Grampian (1961)		3	3(?)[c]	2	2	2	–
Westward (1961)		2	2	1			
Channel (1962)			?[f]	29	15	–	–
Harlech (1968)			?[f]	5	7	*	–
TSW (1982)					15	–	
TVS (1982)					*	*	
TV-AM (1983)					33[g]	–	
Westcountry							20
Satellite Company							
BSkyB							67.5

• Less than one per cent.
[a] Holdings by BET, which the ITA did not define as a press company, but the Press Council did.
[b] Formed Thames jointly.
[c] figure uncertain.
[d] Partly formed Central.
[e] Press holding reduced in 1964 to 55 per cent.
[f] figure unknown.
[g] 1983 figure.
Notes: The former distinction between Network and regional companies lapsed with the introduction of a new networking system in 1993. The size of the companies differs greatly, so the percentages cannot be made into a meaningful average.
Sources: Pilkington Committee, Annan Committee, Press Council, ITC.

Table 4.10 Main newspaper groups' holdings in ITV

Newspaper group	*ITV Company (% voting shares)* 1961		1976		1987		1994	
Associated Newspapers	Southern	38	Southern	38	–		Teletext	45
			Harlech	2			Channel one (cable)	100
							Westcountry	20
BET	Associated Reddifusion	50	Thames	50	Thames	29		
Guardian	Anglia	21	Anglia	20	Anglia	5	GMTV	15
Mirror/Reed	ATV	28	ATV	30	–		–	
News of the World	TWW	25	–	–	–		–	
Westminster Press/Pearson	ATV	7	ATV	5	Yorkshire	21	BSkyB	11
			LWT	4			–	
SUITS	Border	12	Border	14	–	–	–	
D C Thomson	Southern	25	Southern	25	Central	20	–	
Thomson International	Scottish	80	Scottish	25	–		–	
Beaverbrook	–		ATV	8	–		–	
News International	–		LWT	10	*		BSkyB	50
Observer	–		LWT	9	–		–	
Maxwell/Pergamon	–		–		Central	20	–	
Telegraph	–		–		–		Carlton	5
Mirror Group	–		–		–		Scottish TV	20

* Less than one per cent.

BET was not defined as a press group by the Royal Commission on the Press in 1961, nor by the ITA, but it was by the 1974 Commission.

Sources: Royal Commission on the Press, 1974–77, Pilkington Committee, Press Council, ITC.

from that, Table 4.9 shows clearly how the number of network companies part-owned by the press increased, while the size of holding diminished. All the regional companies had press holdings – most of them large – from the beginning. They amounted to 28 per cent of the whole, when the Annan Committee investigated. By 1987 most had been reduced or sold.

The holdings of particular newspaper groups fell into no tidy pattern. Certainly Fleet Street as a whole never plumped for ITV. Nor was there great continuity. The Pearson, *Guardian*, D C Thomson and BET interests were the most sustained, but only the *Guardian* and Pearson's *Financial Times* represented Fleet Street. Ignoring its own changes of proprietorship, the Mirror Group's papers were the largest group continuously associated with ITV. By the 1990s, the Murdoch papers' association with Sky TV was the subject of most controversy, and the subject became part of a broader concern about media cross-ownership.

Apart from the press and the other sources mentioned, ITV finance came from institutions such as banks and pension funds and, in due course, investors on the stock market (usually limited to shares without voting rights). Table 4.11 lists them by rather general categories, partly

Table 4.11 Major ITV companies: categories of shareholder and percentage of voting shares

Company	*1955 (%)*	*1961 (%)*	*1968 (%)*	*1976 (%)*	*1982 (%)*	*1987 (%)*	*1994 (%)*
Associated-Rediffusion							
Press	75	50					
Radio/electronics	25	37	See Thames		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Individuals		12					
ABC							
Cinema/films	100	100	See Thames		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Granada							
Cinema/films/leisure	100	100	100	100	100	100	84
Banks							16
ATV							
Press	26	40					
Radio/electronics	11	16	?	?	See Central		n.a.
Theatre/entertainment	27	27					
Thames							
Press	–	–	50	50	50	29	n.a
Cinema/films			50	50			

Yorkshire							
Press			?	18	35	21	
Banks, insurance, etc.	–	–				6	
Business (WII Smith)						20	
Other ITV							100
LWT							
Press			22(?)	32	32	1	
Radio/electronics							
Banks, insurance, etc.	–	–	50	40(?)		27(?)	
Other corporate							
Staff			30	?		5(?)	
Other ITV							100
Central							
Press					40(?)	40	
Radio/electronic						20	
Banks, insurance, etc.	–	–	–	–		18	
Other corporate					50(?)	?	
Other ITV							100
Carlton							
Press							5
Electronic etc.							90
Other Communications							5
Meridian							
Banks, insurance, etc.							65
Electronic							15
Other ITV							20
GM TV							
Press							15
Walt Disney							25
Other ITV							60

Ownership figures are not easy to trace, and some of these may be unreliable.
Sources: Pilkington Committee, Royal Commissions on the Press: Press Council: ITC.

adopted from the Pilkington Committee. Categories such as 'theatre and entertainment' or 'cinema and film' did not include quite the same things in 1987 as in 1961, or not in the same proportions. It is difficult to discern a strong trend or pattern in the types of finance.

One other noteworthy source of support to franchise bidders, bringing resources less of money than talent (though they often acquired shareholdings later) were the experienced broadcasters, many of whom came from the BBC (inevitably, in 1955). They added an essential element of credibility to the high-sounding rhetoric required of franchise bids by the 'public service' conditions set by the ITA. Even though there was

contact between the ITA and bidders before the formal application date, the grand interview between Governors and applicants in 1954 was by no means ritualistic. Nor was it in 1967, when decisions to disenfranchise as well as to enfranchise were a possibility. Considering the scale of the consequences, it is remarkable that the interviews carried so much weight. The 'creative' people were not necessarily most important in the interviews: but with their reputations as programme controllers, producers, editors, lay an applicant's chief prospects of attracting further talent and, ultimately, the best ratings. In the 1991 franchise round, this fact led to the much criticised use of 'golden handcuffs', by which key personnel were locked to their existing franchise by contracts involving valuable share options.

The initial allocation of franchises in 1954, then, was absolutely not a matter of the ITA folding its arms and waiting for consortia to spring fully formed before it. Franchises were re-allocated by competition in 1964, 1967 and 1981, and although there was each time a public invitation and a grand interview, the procedure involved a good deal of preliminary contact and discussion, not least about such important but apparently secondary factors as studio locations and offices. (The 1991 competition was conducted very differently and is discussed separately below.)

Those re-allocation dates should not be underemphasized. For TWW (1967), Southern (1981) and Westward (1981) they were execution dates; and major surgery dates for ABC and A-R (1967) and ATV (1981). They were the moments, too, when new franchise areas were set up, such as Yorkshire in 1967, and new services such as Breakfast TV (1981) and Channel 4 (1981). But changes in the ownership and control of companies also took place between these dates, sometimes on virtually the same scale and certainly with the same consequences for programme contents. Too much focus on the re-allocation competition risks understating the extent to which ownership and control changed by an irregular but continuing process of adjustment and negotiation with the ITA/IBA about the buying and selling of interests, either on the Authority's or a franchise-holder's initiative.

The award of a franchise to an entirely new company, from scratch, was thus the extreme case. It was done for Harlech and LWT (1967) and for TVS and TSW (1981) in pre-existing regions, and for Yorkshire TV (1967) and TV-AM (1981) with new franchises. Even then there were

elements of adjustment. For instance, TWW, supplanted by Harlech, was given the opportunity by the ITA of buying 40 per cent of the shares in the new company. Lord Derby, furious at losing his franchise, declined. New but unsuccessful bidders were sometimes invited by the Authority to join a winner. For instance the *Yorkshire Post* and three other local press groups joined their former competitor as junior partners in Yorkshire TV in 1967. *The Daily Telegraph, Observer* and *Economist*, unsuccessful in groups bidding variously for the Yorkshire and Central Scotland franchises, were given holdings in LWT.

Another variation was the forced marriage. Thames, awarded the London weekday contract in 1967, was formed by an ITA-initiated merger between A-R, the previous holder, and ABC, the previous holder of Midlands and Northern weekday and weekend contracts. To rub salt into A-R's wounds, ABC was given a majority of voting shares and on the board. In 1981, Central TV was formed rather similarly out of the previous contractor (ATV) and some new shareholders. In the latter case, as in 1967, one factor in the Authority's calculations was a decision to alter the shape of the franchise region.

Changes not brought about directly by the Authority happened in two ways. The more dramatic was the salvage operation. ATV provided the first example in 1955–6, as we have seen, with Mirror Group capital injected at a key psychological moment. In 1964 the tiny Wales (West and North) company effectively went bust, and merged, with its region, into TWW. Then LWT, whose galaxy of creative talent in 1967 just 'had to have its chance, whatever the repercussions,' as the ITA chairman, Lord Hill, put it (Sendall, 1983, p. 364), failed disastrously at company management. In 1971 it was rescued by Rupert Murdoch, who alone was prepared to risk the capital to keep it afloat. LWT was bulging with production talent, headed by Michael Peacock, one of the BBC's golden boys; performance talent, with David Frost a star (and an important shareholder); and a string of business tycoons on the board. But the former knew little of business and the latter little of TV. Against a BBC policy of scheduling popular entertainment opposite LWT's 'serious' programmes, the company made little headway. Peacock was sacked after a year, and other staff followed.

While other network companies mooted various ideas with the ITA for absorbing LWT or making London a single franchise – ideas that were anathema – Murdoch won reluctant ITA approval to buy the

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General Electric Company's 7.5 per cent of the voting shares (and a larger block of non-voting shares, which did not require approval). With this foothold, and after further controversial sackings, he took control, eventually bringing in John Freeman, the eminently respectable journalist and ex-Ambassador to the USA, as chairman. So far was the company now from its original shape that the ITA, in a face-saving operation, submitted the new team to a full-scale franchise-style interview, after which it declared itself satisfied.

TV-AM, equally star-studded, failed equally flamboyantly in 1982. Again, Australian money and management (from Kerry Packer) turned it round. In each case, grand programme ideals were abandoned, with the Authority's connivance, to keep the franchise going. There could easily have been a need for more salvage operations. For ITV was unavoidably vulnerable to the impact of economic recessions upon advertising revenue (for instance, revenue fell by 12 per cent in real terms in 1969–70). Its ability to respond was limited by the IBA's programme requirements. One of the sharpest recessions came a few years after the Conservative government, sensitive to the enormous profits made in earlier years, had imposed (in 1963) a variable levy rising to 45 per cent on the companies' advertising revenue (as distinct from their profits). The position of one second tier company, Tyne-Tees, was so weak that to save costs it 'affiliated' with the network company Yorkshire TV within a joint holding company, Trident. The ITA gave consent, only reluctantly, in view of the statutory rule forbidding ownership of more than one franchise company. A major factor in the decision was that one of the new UHF transmitters introduced in the switch from VHF overlapped both companies' areas. Tyne-Tees, as the smaller enterprise, feared it would lose out. Both companies transferred their capital to Trident and received interest in proportion to their original holdings. The IBA insisted that each company continue with their separate programme responsibilities. In 1980 the Authority brought the arrangement to an end.

In a rather different example from the same period, Scottish TV was so short of cash by February 1970 that it could not pay its ITA rental, nor the levy, nor its bills, nor get further credit from the bank. The ITA saved it by postponement of sums due. HTV, too, blamed the levy for its problems, though expenditure also played a part. The Labour government eased the position by reducing the levy. Governments could vary the levy at will, and it remained a permanent part of the system of

ITV finance. In 1974, it was changed to a levy on profits (later net of Channel 4 costs).

Less dramatic were changes in company ownership following changes in a parent company. Sometimes these resulted in contravention of an Authority rule about foreign ownership or conflict of interest, and further sales followed.

The formation of the original four network companies has already been described. The remainder of those first franchises divided into second and third tiers according to the economic base provided by the populations they served. The third tier was chiefly at the physical and cultural extremities of the nation – the Channel Islands, Ulster, North-East Scotland, South-West England and (the exception) the Anglo-Scottish borders. All started later than the network companies and missed the dreadful first year. Scottish TV came first, launched on the enthusiasm of Roy Thomson, who had difficulty convincing Scottish backers that ITV had a bright future. He thus began with 80 per cent of the voting shares and all the non-voting shares. Lord Derby's consortium for TWW has been mentioned. The Southern region, so close to London, attracted nine applicants, among whom the Rank/Associated Newspapers/Amalgamated Press group, which became Southern TV, was clearly the strongest. The ITA decided that in this region it did not matter if the finance was not 'local'.

Not long after the last regional ITV company went on air, the focus of interest shifted back to the BBC. For the BBC, the Pilkington inquiry had been a vindication and a triumph, confirming the superiority of its own service over the commercial values of ITV, which was moving rapidly into surplus. It was therefore no surprise when the Macmillan government allocated the third TV channel to the BBC in 1963, with a 1964 opening date.

It was becoming the rule not the exception that launches did not go right first time, but BBC2 settled down quite quickly as a recognized minority channel. It could be little else. The government wanted it broadcast on the new UHF/625 lines frequency (the rest of TV was on VHF/405 lines). This meant it was available for the first two years only in London and the South- East and to people who bothered to fit a new aerial. Moreover, it broadcast only for about four hours each evening; and ten years later it was still on air only 60 per cent as much as BBC1. There was no increase in the licence fee to pay for a 50 per cent jump

in programme hours. Expenditure on TV in the year after BBC2 started increased from £27.6 million to £35.8 million (BBC, 1966, p. 194).

The BBC and ITA joined in a major construction programme in the late 1960s to build 50 high powered UHF stations and more than 400 low powered, so that UHF was available to 95 per cent of the population by 1974. Even so, BBC2 remained, as the BBC told the Annan Committee (p. 90), 'the channel for initiation, for large scale departures as well as for tryouts and experiments'. Colour, for example, was introduced in 1967 on BBC2 (not until 1969 was it available on BBC1). BBC2 settled down with about 10 per cent of the total TV audience and heavily subsidized by BBC1, which had four times the viewers at only twice the cost. Until the coming of Channel 4 in 1982, a very rough and varying 40 and 10 per cent audience share for BBC and 50 per cent for ITV was an implicit part of the equilibrium of the duopoly.

While BBC2 was gearing up, the ITA was concerned in 1963–4 with its first round of re-franchising, very low-key compared with what was to come. Contracts were to be awarded for only three years, as the ITA hoped that by 1967 a fourth channel would be available and require more radical reorganization. All the companies had their contracts renewed. Three of the smaller regionals (Border, Grampian and Ulster) were not even opposed. The London weekday franchise attracted five applicants. There were 22 altogether, contrasted with 36 in 1967–8 and 42 in 1981–2.

The ITA took the 1964 competition very seriously, nonetheless. It came in the aftermath of the Pilkington Report, which had roundly condemned ITV, and at a time when profits were fat, as a result of which the government was introducing a tax, in the form of a levy on advertising revenue. The Authority set out new principles governing ownership. Existing companies infringed some of them and Rediffusion, for example, had to adjust its shareholdings.

By 1966 it was clear that a fourth channel was some way off. The ITA decided to split the Northern region into separate Lancashire and Yorkshire franchises, each of which would be large enough to support a network company, increasing the number of these to five. The 'vertical' division of London was adjusted so that the weekend franchise would run from 7.00 pm on Friday, not from Saturday morning. This proved a miscalculation, which added to the financial crisis of the new contractor, LWT, a few years later.

Seventeen new groups entered the competition in 1967 (out of 'two to three hundred' who requested particulars) (Sendall, 1983, p. 337). This time six of the smaller regions were unopposed. On the other hand, there were ten bidders alone for the new Yorkshire contract. Several groups bid in more than one region. Much of the trumpeted 'new talent' came from the BBC.

How were the ITA to proceed? They were not in an easy position. Allocating the new Yorkshire franchise was straightforward: the ITA played matchmaker between two strong, locally based groups. But how should the existing franchise holders be treated? If all were re-appointed, in a replay of 1964, the claim that franchises were 'competitive' would begin to look hollow, and would simply confirm the Pilkington Committee's judgement that to all intents 'the appointment of a programme contractor is virtually irrevocable' (Pilkington, 1962, p. 165). As Lord Hill replied to an outraged Lord Derby, whose TWW had 'stood on its record' and been brusquely dismissed, newcomers such as Harlech could offer only promises, 'but if promise is never to be preferred to performance, then every television company will go on for ever' (Sendall, 1983, p. 359).

On the other hand, the realities of the situation made disenfranchisement both drastic and risky. The ITA could not regard itself as starting with a blank sheet. Disenfranchisement would mean upheavals for staff, start-up costs and teething troubles for the new contractor, and a danger that the service would indeed turn out to be demonstrably less popular than the old contractor's or different from what was promised. Lord Derby complained that he had been given no warnings. ITA powers over programming would make it more difficult, even, to argue that poor performance was wholly a contractor's fault.

The sacrifice of TWW and the merger of ABC and Rediffusion into Thames were acts of some courage and panache, in which the ebullient personality of ITA chairman, Lord Hill, a former broadcasting star as the Radio Doctor in the 1940s and a cabinet minister under Harold Macmillan, were an important factor. Beyond that, the ITA was influenced by the existing configuration of franchise holders, by new applicants' promises and broadcasting talent, by their performance at interview and the extent to which they met the conditions of regionalism and financial soundness. Thus TWW had to compete not only with the mundane but necessary business skills of the Harlech consortium but with the presence of famous Welsh names from the arts – Richard

Burton, Stanley Baker, Geraint Evans – and the authority of Lord Harlech himself, a former minister and Ambassador to the Kennedy White House. Lord Harlech's concluding statement at interview, the official ITV history oddly comments, almost as though the process were a debating competition, 'was the finest piece of spoken prose heard at any of the thirty-six ITA interviews' (Sendall, 1983, p. 358).

Where performance (at interview and in prospect) was decisive for Harlech, the forced marriage of ABC and Rediffusion showed the influence of the existing pattern of weekday/weekend franchises split between the four network companies. With the creation of a new Yorkshire region came a decision to end this split except in London. The Midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire would now be seven-day contracts. With a new applicant taking Yorkshire, with Granada strongly entrenched in Lancashire, and with ATV well placed to concentrate on the Midlands and give up its London weekend franchise, Rediffusion could reasonably assume that it would keep the London weekday contract and that ABC would move into the weekend slot vacated by ATV.

The dazzling LWT application put an end to that idea. If LWT 'had to have their chance' then ABC was out in the cold. A merger with Rediffusion for the weekday contract was a consolation prize for them both. Rediffusion in particular was bitter about this decision. The company had stuck with the infant system at a time when it could easily have collapsed, and the ITA's credibility with it. It had pioneered children's programming for ITV and the use of videotape. In line with ITA recommendations, its board contained a high proportion of professional TV executives. Why should it suffer simply because the ITA wanted to restructure the North and Midlands parts of the system?

The 1967/68 procedure was essentially repeated in 1980/81, with the addition of regional public meetings by the Authority. These were held in belated recognition that the entirely private exercise last time had given the public not even a token opportunity to comment on the various applicants. The competition was postponed from 1976, to allow for the Annan Committee, set up on 1974, to make its report on the future of broadcasting.

The results were fairly similar to 1967: two summary executions and one piece of major surgery. After 20 years or more, Southern TV and Westward had both become vulnerable, but for different reasons. Southern's absentee landlordism (the 25 per cent holding of D C

Thomson of Dundee) was a continuing embarrassment to the regional principle, and the company's programme policy lacked freshness and a clear regional emphasis. Seven or eight serious and strong competitors came forward, and the group headed by former broadcaster and Labour MP, Lord Boston, was successful. Westward had recently been the scene of a public boardroom row that could have come out of a TV series. Again, it was not well placed to withstand the competition.

The major surgery was done to ATV in the Midlands. The IBA decided to make this a 'dual region', with a new centre in Nottingham to balance Birmingham. This involved closing ATV's London base. The IBA hoped to raise half the capital for a new company from Midlands money, with ATV providing the rest. This plan failed on two counts. First, Lord Grade sold ATV to the Australian financier Robert Holmes à Court; second, the 49 per cent of 'Midlands' shares were bought by D C Thomson (who thus made up for losing Southern), the betting company Ladbrokes and the printing and publishing interests of Robert Maxwell. Holmes à Court was obliged by the law against foreign control of ITV to sell his shares, which passed to Sears, a conglomerate including footwear and the William Hill betting shops.

An extra novelty in the 1980–1 franchise competition was the new breakfast time contract. Again events followed a familiar path. Eight groups applied. The IBA was deeply impressed by the star-studded consortium with highfalutin public service plans. Peter Jay, former Treasury civil servant, *Times* economics editor, broadcaster and Ambassador to the USA, provided intellectual thrust; Robert Kee, current affairs experience in depth; David Frost, showbiz contacts; and former ITN news reader Anna Ford, glamour. The company made a disastrous start in February 1983 and found profitability only when it went down market under new management and ownership (partly Australian).

Much more exciting was the launch of Channel 4 in November 1982. Its origins were a combination of expediency and of arguments derived from the public service rhetorical tradition. ITV had assumed ever since the third channel was given to the BBC after Pilkington (as BBC2), that the fourth channel would come to ITV, on the principle of 'fair-dos' and to preserve the balance of the duopoly. Conservative governments were predisposed in that direction. Labour governments leant more sympathetically towards ideas (of which there could be endless variations) for some kind of 'Open Broadcasting Authority', to use the Annan Commit-

tee's phrase. The point of this would be to escape the duopoly and some of the rigidity of the franchise system. In practical terms, programme makers increasingly fretted that, in a system now producing many hours of television, it was virtually impossible to work independently of the BBC or an ITV company. On the public service plane, there was a persuasive case that the duopoly was structurally and financially biased towards the common denominators of society and culture, even if not the lowest denominators. Where ITV met the needs of regions viewed as 'minorities' within the nation, the fourth channel should be a national service, but serving social and cultural minorities: blacks, feminists, philosophers, gays, American football fanatics, and so on.

The outcome was determined eventually by the accident of which party was in power. It happened to be the Conservatives, with an accomplished fixer, William Whitelaw, as responsible Minister. Channel 4 emerged as a company wholly owned by the IBA, with directors serving a limited term. Its function was to commission and buy programmes from independents and the franchise companies, not to make them itself. News was supplied by ITN. Finance was provided by the ITV companies as a 'subscription', and the companies raised it by selling the advertising time on Channel 4 in their own regions. The channel thus had financial security without either public subsidy or the need to bow to the ratings. In Wales, a separate fourth channel authority operated on similar lines, producing the channel S4C.

A deliberately experimental service, designed to seek small, specialized and neglected audiences, was a recipe guaranteed to make mistakes. Channel 4 did so, with early programmes attracting audiences too low to register on the ratings. With the help of a few sure-fire successes brought over from ITV, it gradually established itself, though still subsidized by the subscriptions. By 1990 it had gone through the familiar process: what started as a compromising fudge had been rationalized as yet another creative act of policy, fitting in with its unique character to a harmonious pattern of public service broadcasting. The replacement of its pioneer chief executive Jeremy Isaacs, a leading public service broadcaster, by the more 'commercial' Michael Grade, looked ominous, particularly as Mrs Thatcher had contemplated privatizing the channel. But Grade proved a worthy successor. Under the post-Broadcasting Act formula of selling its own advertising, he made Channel 4 so successful that by 1995, far from needing a subsidy, he had paid back to the Channel 3

companies nearly £100 million in two years, which otherwise could have been spent commissioning programmes.

The franchise competition following the 1990 Broadcasting Act incorporated the radical new auction principle. By the closing date of 15 May 1991, 37 sealed bids were submitted to the ITC for the 15 regional franchises and three for the national breakfast time licence, each stating how much the applicant would pay the Treasury per year. (See table 4.12) Some companies, such as the ambitious electronic and film conglomerate Carlton, bid in more than one region – and could in principle have been successful in each (provided they were not contiguous or large). In three regions the existing franchise holder was sole bidder. One of these, Central TV, knowing the position, bid a derisory £2,000. Carlton, in contrast, had to bid £43 million to win the comparably valuable London weekday franchise.

The ITC spent the summer scrutinizing the applicants' programme proposals, business plans, ownership and engineering arrangements. The 'quality threshold' involved judgements both about initial quality and about whether the level was likely to be maintained. Where more than one applicant passed the threshold, consideration also had to be given to whether exceptional quality justified awarding the franchise to an under-bidder. The ritual bow to public opinion required a six-week 'consulation period': 21,250 requests for application summaries were received and 2,278 people and organizations offered comments.

The results were faxed to applicants on 15 October. Of the thirteen contested franchises, nine went to the existing holders. The four losers were Thames (London weekday), TVS (south and south-east), TSW (south-west) and TV-AM (breakfast). Thames was heavily outbid by Carlton, whose own bid was exceeded by an applicant who failed the quality test. The failure of TVS caused little surprise. Its £60 million bid was the highest in the entire auction, and it passed the quality threshold; but the ITC did not believe it would be able to afford to implement its proposed plans. TSW failed on the same basis, bidding twice as high as the winner. Later it unsuccessfully challenged the decision in the courts, right up to the House of Lords.

TV-AM seemed most stunned by its failure. It was hugely outbid by two competitors (£33 and £34 million to £14 million). Its flamboyant Australian chairman, Bruce Gyngell, declared (wrongly) that the winner would surely go bankrupt. There was irony in his defeat: his determina-

Table 4.12 ITV Channel 3 franchise bids, 1991

Region (viewers)	*Winner*	*Bid (£m)*	*Owners*	*Losers*
National Breakfast (54.8m)	Sunrise TV (GMTV)	34.6	LWT (20%) Scottish TV (20%)/Guardian & Manchester Evening News (15%)/Walt Disney (15%)/30% to be placed with institutional shareholders	TV-am (incumbent, £14.12m)/Daybreak TV. (£33.3m)
London weekday (10.57m)	Cariton Television	43.2	Carlton Communications (90%)/*Daily Telegraph* (5%)/Rizzoli Corriere della Sera (5%)	Thames (incumbent, £32.5m)/CPV-TV (£45.3m, failed quality)
London weekend (10.57m)	LWT (incumbent)	7.58	Institutional investors, directors	London Independent Broadcasting (£35.4m, failed quality)
South and Southeast (5.044m)	Meridian	36.5	MAI (65%)/Central TV (20%)/Selec TV (15%)	TVS (incumbent, £59.8m. overbid)/Carlton (£18.1m)/CPV-TV (£22.1m, failed quality)
Midlands (9.2m)	Central	£2000*	Carlton (19.4%)/D C Thomson & Co (19.2%)	Unchallenged
North West (6.33m)	Granada (incumbent)	9.0	Granada Group (100%)	North West TV (£35.3m, failed quality)
Yorkshire (5.43m)	Yorkshire Television (incumbent)	37.7	Institutional investors	White Rose (£17.4m)/Viking (£30.1m, failed quality)
East of England (3.858m)	Anglia (incumbent)	17.8	Institutional investors	Three East (£14.1m)/CPV-TV (£10.1m, failed quality)
Wales and the West (4.298m)	HTV (incumbent)	20.5	Phillips & Drew (9.5%)/FMR Corp (6%)/Barclays Bank (7.6%)	C3W (£17.8m)/Merlin (£19.4m. failed quality)/C3WW (18.3m. failed quality)

South West England (1.52m)	Westcountry	7.8	Associated Newspapers (20%)/Brittany Ferries (15%)/South West Water (20%)/Trilion (10%)	TSW (Incumbent. (£16.1m, overbid)./TeleWest (£7.3m, failed quality)
Northern Ireland (1.4m)	Ulster (incumbent)	1.02	Institutional investors	TVni (£3.1m. failed business plan)/Lagan (£2.7m, failed quality)
North East (2.852m)	Tyne Tees (incumbent)	15.1	Institutional investors	North East Television (£5m)
North Scotland (1.095m)	Grampian (incumbent)	0.72	Local businessmen	C3 Caledonia (£1.13m failed quality)/North of Scotland TV (£2.71m, failed quality)
Borders (629,000)	Border	0.052	Local businessmen	Unchallenged
Central Scotland (3.557m)	Scottish Television	£2000*	Chase Nominees (8%)/Scottish Amicable (7%)/Phildrew Nominees (6.7%)/Bank of Scotland (6.6%)	Unchallenged
Channel Islands (135,000)	Channel (incumbent)	£1,000*	Channel Islands Communications (100%)	C13 (£102,000, failed quality)

Notes: * These bids are in thousands of £s, not millions. Bids in 1993 prices. Viewing figures are total possible audience.
Source: ITC.

tion to eliminate overmanning and his success in strike breaking had made a fan out of Mrs Thatcher and helped to entrench the auction principle as a cost-cutting device. Gyngell pulled a personal letter from her out of his pocket and spontaneously read it in public. 'When I see how some of the licences have been awarded', Mrs Thatcher had written, 'I am *mystified* that you did not receive yours, and heartbroken. You of all people have done so much for the whole of television and there seems to be no attention to that. I am only too painfully aware that I was responsible for the legislation.'

Four of the winners retained their existing franchise by submitting the highest bid. The other five survivers were luckier, in the sense that they were outbid – but by companies who failed the quality test. In this way Granada was saved from a well publicized challenge by the creator of the soap *Brookside*. Granada was thus the sole surviver of the original ITV companies of the mid-1950s.

Losers – but not only losers – forecast that while Central was clearly going to coin money, some franchiseholders looked set initially for big losses. All sought economies. Carlton, LWT and GMTV, for example, arranged to use a single transmission suite for their programmes, where formerly three had been used. The ITC permitted Yorkshire TV to take over the small neighbouring Tyne Tees, to get economies of scale. Companies slimmed their staffs. In a move consistent with the principles of the Act and the growth of independent production companies, some of the new franchise-holders, such as Carlton, planned to keep down costs by operating as 'publisher/contractors', buying programmes rather than making them in house. The enforced retirement of Granada's chairman, David Plowright, epitome of old standards and methods, was widely seen as signalling a shift towards dominance by accountants and financial managers. Sure enough, Granada could report that pre-tax profits from television had doubled during the six months up to April 1995.

Among the disenfranchised companies, TVS was bought by the US Family Channel, owned by the evangelist Pat Robertson. TV-AM found jobs for the majority of its staff, many with GMTV, and Basil Gyngell went back to Australia. Thames, the largest casualty, joined with the BBC to launch a satellite service, UK Gold, based on its backlist of hits (*Take Your Pick, Rumpole*, etc.). It continued to make contemporary hits, such as *The Bill*, for Carlton – which also took a quarter of its staff. Overall, the staff was planned to shrink from 1,600 to 140.

Another major change, though less noticeable to the viewer than the new company logos, was the creation of a central unit to buy programmes for the national network (ie all those not shown in only one of the fifteen regions). The old system was essentially a cartel of the big franchisees. Now, a network centre was set up, headed by the former chief executive of Granada, with some £500 million per year to spend on buying and commissioning programmes (and with power of life and death over small production companies).

No sooner were the new franchise awards in place than owners of some of the big ones started lobbying for changes to the takeover rules. They felt that the new network system would be difficult to operate with so many players (including direct access by independent producers). They wanted economies of scale, to help pay their auction fees to the Treasury; and they claimed increased size would strengthen them internationally, even though the biggest would be only middle-sized by international standards. They won their argument. At the end of 1993 the government relaxed the 1990 Broadcasting Act rules to allow companies to own two, not one, of the nine large franchises. (The exception was London, where the weekday and weekend franchises were still to be held by separate companies).

Within weeks the big firms had swooped. MAI, owners of the south-eastern franchise (Meridian), took over Anglia, in an agreed bid. Carlton likewise took over Central. Granada took over LWT, but only after strong resistance from the existing owners. (See table 4.13.) The new rules still safeguarded regional programme content. But these three,

Table 4.13 ITV company mergers, 1994

Company	*Controlling Ownership (or %) of Other Franchise Companies*	
	1993	*1994*
Carlton	Carlton Central (20.0) GMTV (20.0)	Carlton Central GMTV Meridian (20.0)
Granada	Granada LWT (17.5)	Granada LWT YTTV (14.0)
MAI	Meridian	Meridian Anglia

Source: ITC.

plus Yorkshire Tyne Tees, now accounted for 82 per cent of Channel 3 advertising revenue, with seven other separate licensees accounting for the rest. Broader issues of cross-ownership – of press, satellite, cable and radio – remained open.

As to programme quality, the ITC's powers were retroactive under the new Act. So a school report – the *Annual Performance Review* – was issued after the first year's broadcasting. Words were not minced. GMTV was so dreadful that it was given a formal warning – the first step towards a fine or even withdrawal of the licence. Carlton too was disappointing and was told to do better. The others were given grades of satisfactory or better.

All these changes took place while satellite services developed on separate tracks, almost as though there were a distinction like the one between private medicine and the NHS, or public and maintained schools. The licensing and cross-ownership rules in the 1990 Broadcasting Act covered 'domestic' satellite TV services, originated in Britain, but not 'non-domestic' ones based abroad. By 1990, there were two main contenders. Rupert Murdoch's Sky TV, broadcast from February 1989 on the Luxembourg-based Astra satellite, was non-domestic. BSB, controlled by the British groups Pearson, Granada and Reed, and the French conglomerate Chargeurs, broadcast on its own satellite from April 1990 and was 'domestic'. There was a strong unsubstantiated belief that the legislative distinction was deliberately drawn in order to favour Murdoch, whose newspaper holdings of some 35 per cent of total national circulation took him far above the Act's 20 per cent maximum permissible for a TV franchise holder.

In 1990 both companies haemorrhaged money at a heroic rate. Sky's estimated £400 million losses were causing Murdoch's parent group significant cash and debt management problems, despite its claim of more than one million dish subscribers and 300,000 on cable for its four channels. BSB had soaked up £1.3 billion of investment and claimed an audience of 600,000 for five channels. In November 1990 the rivals merged – which meant, in effect, a Sky takeover, with Murdoch dominating management and shareholdings. Thereafter BSkyB, as it was cumbersomely called, made gradual if not always easily measured progress (amid complaints that Murdoch's papers puffed it shamelessly). Sky's original services had been 'free', but now they were encrypted and viewers became used to the principle of paying by subscription. Equally, they had to accept that Sky would do deals such as with Premier League

football, whereby they bid £304 million (over five years) to show games live, with BBC having second bite and showing highlights.

For much of 1992, BSkyB subscribers grew at 90,000 a month, with an additional 100,000 when the company won rights to show the cricket World Cup. By 1995 it claimed more than 3.5 million subscribers and was making a sufficient operating profit to justify floating shares on the stock exchange. Contrary to the earlier pattern, moreover, about 40 per cent of the viewers were in the ABC1 social grades, compared with 30 per cent a year earlier.

Cable, by comparison, made much slower progress. In 1983 eleven pilot franchises were allocated, representing a maximum (if cabled) of 1.25 million homes. The removal of 100 per cent capital allowances in the 1984 Budget, the ban on non-European Community investors and, later, the arrival of BSkyB, all delayed progress. In 1989 there were still no more than fourteen franchises and a small number of subscribers, with a rapid turnover.

The 1990 Broadcasting Act removed the foreign ownership restriction. Soon after, the government also removed most of the restrictions on cable being used for telephony. The result was a surge of investment, chiefly by north American telecoms companies such as Telewest, Nynex, Bell Cablemedia and SBC. Their eventual profit would come from interactive services and the hundreds of potential TV channels and telephone links which broadband technology makes possible. In the year July 1993–4, subscribing homes jumped from 239,000 to 841,000, a 40 per cent increase, with 3.34 million homes capable of being connected. A million more homes were 'passed' in the year that followed. The sums involved were mind-boggling. In 1994 alone, investment of £1.2 billion was expected. At the same time, franchise holders began to merge. The industry shrank from fifty-two operators in the mid-1980s to sixteen in 1995. The merger in 1995 between Telewest (the biggest company) and SBC produced an organisation with 25 per cent of the total market.

Cable's interactive potential would take years to realize, and TV, in the familiar sense, might not then be the key part of it. In the 1990s, certainly most of what cable delivered on some fifty operational channels was available already on terrestrial and satellite TV. But the rate of cable growth was now faster than satellite, and there were more than a dozen channels available *only* on cable. Most of these were specialized (Asia Vision; Euronews; the Parliamentary Channel). Most similar to 'normal'

TV, perhaps, was Channel One, a round-the-clock London channel, with the programme mix of a middle market tabloid paper, launched in November 1994 by Associated Newspapers.

In the space of little more than five years, then, since Sky TV first wrinkled the noses of middle England with its obtrusive satellite dishes (rather as noses had wrinkled at the first H-shaped TV aerials in the 1940s), the world of British TV changed like maps of the World at the end of the Middle Ages. The irony of the 1990 Broadcasting Act was that it legislated for viewers whose main use of a monitor screen was to watch 'television', by which they meant a signal sent from a terrestrial transmit-

Table 4.14 TV channels: means of delivery, 1995

Channel (Type of Programme)	*Delivery System*		
	Terrestrial	*Satellite*	*Cable*
BBC 1	×		×
BBC 2	×		×
ITV Channel 3	×		×
ITV Channel 4	×		×
Sky One (Entertainment)		×	×
Sky Movies		×	×
Sky Movies Gold		×	×
Sky News		×	×
Sky Soap [not weekends]		×	×
Sky Sports		×	×
Sky Sports 2 [weekends]		×	×
Sky Travel [not weekends]		×	×
CNN (News)		×	×
The Movie Channel		×	×
UK Gold (BBC/Thames repeats)		×	×
Bravo (movies, comedy/drama series)		×	×
Discovery (Nature and science)		×	×
Eurosport		×	×
Family Channel (Entertainment)		×	×
NBC Superchannel (Children)		×	×
UK Living (Women)		×	×
Children's Channel		×	×
Cartoon Network		×	×
Nickelodeon (Children)		×	×
TNT (Classic movies)		×	×
MTV (Music videos and features)		×	×
TLC (Educational)		×	×
QVC (Home shopping)		×	×

VH-1 (Music videos)	×	×
CMTE (Country music)	×	×
Adult Channel (Adult entertainment)	×	×
Zee-TV (Asian)	×	×
Home Video Channel		×
SelecTV (Comedy and drama)		×
Asianet		×
Performance (Classical music)		×
IDTV (Afro-Caribbean)		×
Travel TV		×
Parliamentary Channel		×
Channel One (London)		×
Live TV (London)		×

Note: The listed satellite channels are all available on Astra. The three Astra satellites carry a total of 73 channels, many of them encrypted. Four Eutelsat satellites carry 62 channels, and two Intelsat satellites carry 19 channels.
Source: *TV and Satellite Week*, June 10–16 1995. The magazine also lists 20 foreign channels (some in English) available to Astra dish owners and to some cable subscribers.

ter and under the regulation of a beneficent public policy. The limited vision embedded in the Act (which is not to say there should not have been an Act, nor that ITV did not still need organizing) can be symbolized by table 4.14. This shows the channels listed in magazines such as *TV and Satellite Week*, 1990s companions to *Radio Times* and *TV Times*. Like many luxuriant menus, no doubt, many of the dishes tasted the same, and most people chose from a few (terrestrial) favourites. But the simple certainties of the BBC/ITV duopoly were gone for ever.

5 Media Empires: Concentration, Conglomeration, Internationalization

The new tangle of broadcasting in the 1990s was one aspect of a broader media complexity, which attracted increasing attention in the 1980s. It involved three linked trends – concentration, conglomeration and internationalization. Media of all kinds seemed more and more to be under the control of a few large international corporations, headed by brusque individualists and outsize personalities such as Rupert Murdoch, Robert Maxwell, and Conrad Black, who were natural heirs, perhaps, to the Beaverbrooks and Kemsleys. This development was undoubtedly happening; but it is important to be clear exactly which features were different from the immediate post-war years and which continued as before. These distinctions are especially important since the development is easier to illustrate in broad terms than to measure precisely.

Media concentration, conglomeration, and internationalization long preceded 1945. Concentration is normally measured by number of newspaper titles (or radio stations, and so on) or market share. Northcliffe had a bigger share of Fleet Street morning circulation in 1910 (39 per cent) than Murdoch in 1995 (35.6 per cent) and the same number of titles (three). Foreign ownership goes back just as far, in the sense that individuals such as Waldorf Astor and Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook) used foreign capital to buy into the English press. Some inter-war newspaper firms were already conglomerates, too, through diversification

into allied businesses such as newsprint production. Associated Newspapers (*Daily Mail*) controlled the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company, which owned land, railways, shipping and mines, as well as paper mills. Odhams (*Daily Herald* and magazines) was primarily a printing business. The Cadbury (*News Chronicle*) fortunes were based in cocoa. Like so many other newspaper owners, the Cadburys had been businessmen first and press magnates later – through involvement with party politics. In the cinema, another growth medium interwar, Hollywood money so dominated British film production that the government introduced protectionist policies.

The distinctive features of concentration, conglomeration and internationalization as they developed through the 1980s can perhaps be described as their *scope, scale, management, balance* and *volatility*. The expansion of new media (and new forms of old media) was obviously a major cause. The growth of ITV, transistor radios and Walkmans, LPs, CDs, audio tapes and VCRs, even free sheets, tended to follow familiar economic patterns. Unless, like ITV, they were regulated, competition and economies of scale gradually reduced the number of suppliers and increased market share. More media, equally, meant more scope for conglomeration – horizontally, at local, regional or national level, and vertically between all three. A 'media conglomerate' in 1945 was largely print-based, perhaps with unrealized property assets and some 'trade investments' in subsidiary businesses, such as paper. The arrival of ITV in 1955 transformed the situation, acting as a focal point for previously unconnected interests. The expansion of cable, satellite and commercial radio in the 1990s changed it again. By 1995 the conglomerates thus had a much wider range.

The post-war economic recovery and continued growth, added to the new media, meant that the scale of media enterprises grew both absolutely and as a proportion of the whole economy. By the late 1980s, the largest organizations were likely to operate most efficiently if they did so at an international level, raising capital internationally and supplying international markets. Overseas tycoons, too, such as the ephemeral Australians Robert Holmes à Court and Alan Bond, and the enduring Canadian, Conrad Black, saw British firms as a good base in which to expand outside their own domestic markets.

Those trends saw the eclipse of the old style media baron. The typical baron in 1945 still owned the majority of shares in his company, perhaps in common with his family. But bigger enterprises and conglomerates

increasingly overstretched them. Murdoch and Maxwell looked and sounded like Northcliffe and Beaverbrook, but the looks deceived. Lord Stevens (of United Newspapers) 'isn't the proprietor of anything' one baron pointed out to the author of a study of press empires. 'He's a hired chairman'. (Coleridge, 1993, p. 557.)

Two events in the 1960s symbolize the shift. One was the peremptory sacking of Cecil King in 1968 by the Mirror Group board, of which he was chairman. He had behaved like his authoritarian uncle Northcliffe but, as we have seen, without actually owning the paper he managed. Northcliffe could not be sacked; King could. The second was a modest change of name by the Fleet Street trade association, the NPA, at about the same time. Formerly the Newspaper *Proprietors* Association, it now became the Newspaper *Publishers* Association, marking a shift from member groups dominated by a single proprietor to corporations managed on more orthodox commercial lines and with a wide range of finance. Maxwell and Murdoch were no doubt entrenched in their organizations by the complexities of cross-holdings and foreign-registered companies, but their personal holdings were proportionately small, particularly in comparison with their predecessors. The funds they manipulated were substantially other people's, often pension fund managers and bankers. As we saw, Murdoch was able to control LWT in 1971 with initially just 7.5 per cent of the voting shares. In 1995, his family controlled about one-third of the shares in the parent company, News Corporation.

One other change of balance should be noted. This is the rough distinction between non-media conglomerates with a media side-interest and, in contrast, media conglomerates that diversified outwards. This distinction reflects the mixture of accident and design by which they grew. The old newspaper conglomerates of national and provincial daily, Sunday, weekly and periodical publications had an obvious logic, which extended to the acquisition of printing plant and paper mills. Cinema chains and film production made an equally obvious pair. So, in one way or another, did the various combinations participating in the original ITV finances.

Even after they had ceased to be largely print-based, most conglomerates up until the 1970s remained primarily media organizations. ITV companies were bound to diversify because they were banned from holding more than one franchise. Granada, for instance, rented and sold

TV sets and electrical equipment and expanded into leisure services such as bowling, nightclubs, hotels, theme parks, motorway services and contract catering. Newspapers had to bear in mind restrictions the Monopolies Commission could impose (though this proved a feeble weapon, as Murdoch's accumulation of titles showed). Their ITV holdings were progressively restricted by IBA policy. So they diversified abroad, or into specialized publishing and books, recorded music, radio and leisure activities.

From the 1970s, the balance shifted. Media conglomerates diversified further away, and non-media conglomerates moved into media. Either way, the non-media element of organizations controlling media increased. As the Press Commission put it in 1977 (p. 149), 'Rather than saying that the press has other business interests, it would be truer to argue that the press has become a subsidiary of other interests'. (See table 5.1 for a summary of some contemporary media empires).

The Thomson organization was an early example of movement outwards. Indeed, it illustrates very clearly all three features of concentration, conglomeration and internationalization. Roy Thomson assembled from nothing a chain of small-town papers and radio stations in Canada. *The Scotsman*, when he bought it in 1954, was the first significant British daily (Fleet Street included) to go into international ownership. His purchase of the Kemsley newspaper chain was a step in the overall process of press concentration and gave him a Fleet Street prize, *The Sunday Times*. His business methods, including the boosting of small ads and telephone sales, reflected North American management styles. His successful enthusiasm for Scottish TV made the business a media conglomerate, as did the acquisition of book publishers, magazines and the contract for Yellow Pages (another American invention). Purchase of *The Times* itself in 1966 was a culmination, and a further move towards concentration. The success of the TV and press interests (including papers now far from the North American base, in West Africa for instance) led him to diversify, taking an important stake in North Sea oil. (Associated Newspapers did the same, and both groups thereby had a useful cushion when the oil price rises and economic crises of the early 1970s saw newsprint prices quadruple.) He diversified too into the booming package holiday and travel business and by 1989 was the UK's biggest tour operator. Increasingly, his business became a non-media conglomerate.

Table 5.1 Selected media conglomerates, 1994

Organization (and controller)	*Press*	*TV & Radio*	*Other*
Daily Mail & General Trust (Lord Rothermere)	*Daily Mail* *Mail on Sunday* 15 regional dailies *Evening Standard* (London) Harmsworth magazines Euromoney publications	Westcountry TV (20%) Teletext (45%) London Channel One (Cable) Performance TV (Cable) SelecTV (15%) Local Radio (Chiltern & GWR groups)	Exhibitions Transport
Granada (Gerry Robinson, chief executive)		Granada TV LWT BSkyB (13%) Production studios ITN (18%) TV news services	Motorway Services Theme parks, bowling & leisure services. Contract catering. TV & Video equipment. Sales & Rental. Mobile phones. Computer servicing.
Guardian Media Group (Scott Trust)	*Guardian* *Manchester Evening News* *Observer* Auto Trader magazines (50%)	GMTV (15%) Broadcast Communications Local Radio (Transworld Communications)	
MAI (Lord Hollick)		Meridian (61%) Anglia ITN (5%) YTTV (14%) Local Radio (Chiltern Group)	Financial services
Mirror Group	*Daily Mirror* *Sunday Mirror* *People* *Daily Record* *Independent* (29%) *Independent on Sunday*	Scottish TV (20%)	

Pearson (Pearson family)	*Financial Times* *Economist* 9 regional papers 8 financial magazines Technical journals and directories French & Spanish newspapers	Thames (production company) BSkyB (17%)* Grundy Worldwide (Australian TV Co.) Satellite TV (with BBC Worldwide)	Pearson Longman book publishers (Penguin, etc.) Addison Wesley (USA) Mme Tussauds Alton Towers Lazard's Bank Oil Services
Reed International (Ian Irvine, chairman)	4 Regional Papers Britain's largest business magazine publisher IPC consumer magazines Elsevier Science publishers		Book publishing (Butterworth, Heinemann, etc.)
United Newspapers (Lord Stevens, chairman)	*Daily Express* *Sunday Express* *Daily Star* 6 Regional papers 160 Business and consumer magazines, and 150 overseas		Property Financial Services

Note: Excludes companies such as EMAP and Thomson Corp., with interests concentrated in one medium. Companies' interests fluctuate, and this is intended only as an indicative list.
* Pearson sold its BSkyB holding in a surprise move in 1995.
Sources: Various

The later Thomson story illustrates also the volatility of the conglomerate in the 1980s. Companies chopped and changed their holdings, for reasons that might have little to do with the specific nature of the businesses involved. Thomson's son poured so much money into *The Times* in the vain effort to modernize it in the late 1970s that no one could blame him for wanting to sell it. But when he did so (with *The Sunday Times*) to Murdoch in 1981, the reason in fact was the wider international strategy of the organization. The North American interests were paramount (with headquarters in Toronto), concentrating on newspapers, books, data and information systems, travel and oil. The

regional UK press interests, and the travel and oil, still made sense, but *The Times* did not. The Scottish TV holdings, too, were a thing of the past. (In 1995 the regional newspapers also were sold.)

A similar if less conspicuous story might be told of the Reed conglomerate. Until the 1960s, this was a paper-making company in which the Mirror Group (IPC) held 44 per cent of the shares as a somnolent investment. Under the expansionist management of Don Ryder (a former financial journalist whose later success took him, inevitably it might seem, to the House of Lords) the company diversified – into wallpaper products for example, By 1971, Reed had outgrown its parent company, which it proceeded to take over. The *Mirror* thus passed from owning to being owned by a non-newspaper interest.

In the 1970s and 1980s Reed changed a lot. Early on, it sold its 21 per cent holding in ATV. In 1984, it sold the *Mirror* titles themselves, giving Robert Maxwell his long sought Fleet Street base; and it entered the 1990s essentially as an international paper, packaging and publishing conglomerate. It was especially strong in business and consumer magazines, with well known titles such as *Woman's Own, Country Life* and *New Scientist*, book-publishing mini-conglomerates such as Octopus, and business publications in Europe and North America. In 1993 Reed joined the Dutch group Elsevier, creating one of the World's biggest publishers.

The movement of non-media conglomerates into media has a more random appearance – a different kind of logic – than the diversification by Thomson and Reed (and Reed's movement back again). Earliest into the national newspaper market after 1945 was the Pearson group, previously interested only in a regional newspaper chain (Westminster Press). This had developed from a side-interest of the original Weetman Pearson (Lord Cowdray), a civil engineer and Liberal activist before and after the First World War. The main Pearson interests remained in international banking, property and business.

When they bought *The Financial Times* in 1957, the Pearsons started to expand further into media. They bought a half-share of *The Economist*, Penguin Books, the Longman publishing group and other familiar book imprints (including Michael Joseph, Hamish Hamilton, Sphere, Ladybird and Pitman). They expanded their financial and business magazines. They took a stake in the BSB satellite company. Their non-media businesses included startling acquisitions such as the prestige Chateau Latour vineyard, Madame Tussand's and the Royal Doulton china

business. Behind all this lay the American, British and continental European bank interests, such as Lazard's.

Pearson's media interests expanded in the 1990s: Royal Doulton-type eccentricities were disposed of. Murdoch's takeover of BSB left Pearson with a 14 per cent holding in BSkyB. But the company bought Thames TV's production studios, which continued to make profitable series such as *The Bill*. For the longer term, Pearson joined with BBC Worldwide, to develop global satellite services. It also ran a financial news satellite service, based on the *Financial Times*. It bid for the Channel 5 TV franchise, and in 1995 it bought the Australian-based TV production company, Grundy, best known in the UK for its soap, *Neighbours*. Pearson thus remained thoroughly international, with interests spread across a wide range of media. The decision to sell its BSkyB holding in 1995 came as a surprise.

A good later example of a non-media conglomerate moving into the press for non-media reasons is the Trafalgar House purchase of Beaverbrook Newspapers in 1978. Trafalgar was chiefly a property group, with hotel and travel interests and civil engineers such as Trollope and Colls. Its first links with Beaverbrook came through refurbishing the *Express* building in Fleet Street. The Beaverbrook papers were in financial trouble, and Trafalgar beat the competition to buy them, with its main interest being the asset value of the group's properties. The vice-chairman, a self-made businessman, Victor Matthews, gave every appearance of enjoying the role of press tycoon and duly entered the House of Lords after the return of a Conservative government.

Trafalgar moved out of the press again when they sold their titles to United Newspapers in 1985. This was unusual but not unique. *The Observer*, for instance, spent six years in the ownership of the Atlantic Richfield oil company of California. This was the result of a chance encounter in 1975, when the Astor ownership was frantically trying to fight control passing to Murdoch or the *Daily Mail*. Similarly Sir James Goldsmith, whose fortunes were in the food industry, started a weekly news magazine, *Now*, in 1979, after failing to purchase a suitable established title. The magazine folded two years later and Goldsmith's attention turned elsewhere.

The *Observer* passed in 1981 from Atlantic Richfield to another non-media group with incidental media interests. This was 'Tiny' Rowland's conglomerate Lonrho. Its name (from 'London' and 'Rhodesia') reflected its origins as a Central African trading company. Rowland,

as has previously been indicated, was the kind of entrepreneur to attract adjectives like 'maverick'. His interest in media started as a by-product of buying the House of Fraser, initially a large department stores group built up by a nationalistic Scot, Lord Fraser of Annandale. Fraser had bought control of Scottish press and publishing interests, such as the Glasgow *Herald* and *Evening Times* publishers George Outram, specifically in order to prevent them being bought by the Canadian Roy Thomson.

The *Observer* was Lonrho's most conspicuous asset. It never made money and was losing heavily when the directors sold it to the *Guardian* in 1993. Rowland used it to fight non-media battles, notably over control of the Harrods store, which at one time had been part of the House of Fraser group. He also mounted a rescue operation in 1986 for Eddie Shah's *Today*, which quickly ran out of capital, but he soon sold it on to Murdoch. With the Scottish interests had come a stake too in one of the small regional ITV companies, Border. But as Rowland's grip on Lonrho weakened, the media interests were sold off. Even at their peak, they were a small part of the whole enterprise.

British Electric Traction was another conglomerate which, as its name implies, moved into media from outside. Its regional press and magazine holdings went back some time but were not large enough to qualify it as a media company. By the late 1980s, however, its 28 per cent share of Thames TV and 13 per cent share of the Capital Radio ILR combine certainly qualified it. But its importance as a media company then declined, when Thames lost its franchise in 1991.

The 1980s were marked also by what turned out to be a brief invasion of British media by two Australian buccaneers, Alan Bond and Robert Holmes à Court (neither Australian born). In 1982 Holmes à Court captured Lew Grade's ACC organization, which owned half of ATV and a variety of film, cinema, theatre and music interests. Grade had overstretched himself and lost money heavily on box office flops such as *Raise the Titanic* and biblical epics. Bond came later, from a base initially in real estate and classic Australian beer and mining companies. He took a 15 per cent holding in the BSB satellite channel, for example. Both entrepreneurs were drastically affected by the 1987 stock market crash and the Australian recession. The British media interests of neither survived.

In the early 1990s the best example of a non-media group moving into media was MAI. This had been built up as a financial services

conglomerate (money broking, insurance, car loans, etc.) from the wreckage of an earlier company which Clive Hollick, then twenty-nine, was brought in to reorganize in 1974. Hollick worked for a merchant banker, Hambro, and was unusual in the City for being an active Labour supporter – and in due course a Labour peer. He turned MAI (named from the initials of one of the original properties, the outdoor advertising firm Mills and Allen) into one of Europe's major companies. The move into media came when he was persuaded to back a bid for the southern ITV franchise in 1991. This success with Meridian, of which MAI owned 61 per cent, was followed by the takeover of Anglia in 1994 and later by the purchase of 14 per cent of Yorkshire Tyne Tees. The latter was assumed to reflect a potential interest in taking over YTTV, if the ownership restrictions were further relaxed.

With Anglia MAI got a small share (5 per cent) of ITN. The company also bought 20 per cent of the Chiltern radio group. It bid with Pearson and Time Warner for the new Channel 5 TV franchise. Hollick was interested, too, as a Labour man, in the future of the Mirror group papers after the Maxwell collapse. His Meridian interests would have prevented more than a 20 per cent holding; but he fell out with the chief executive, David Montgomery, and resigned in 1993.

The other major newcomer to TV in the 1990s was Carlton. This was already a media company only in the broader, modern sense. Its creator, Michael Green, an under-achiever at school, built it up from a small photo-processing company. After fifteen years, this took off when, in 1982, Green moved into video production and copying, hire of TV studios and facilities, and technical electronic services such as digital effects. He was a major beneficiary of the video boom and used his profits to diversify and expand abroad. Between 1984–5 and 1987–8, pre-tax profits more than quadrupled from £5 million to more than £20 million. Green then tried to buy into ITV by taking over their share of Thames TV from BET and Thorn EMI. The IBA vetoed the deal: they wanted a broader rather than a narrower range of owners. Green had to settle temporarily for 20 per cent of Central TV, which he bought from the betting group Ladbroke in 1987.

Carlton's success in the 1991 franchise auction made the company a key ITV player. With its takeover of Central early in 1994, after the ownership rules were relaxed, its position was even stronger. It owned in addition 20 per cent of GMTV, 20 per cent of Meridian and its

Table 5.2 Carlton Communications, 1994

Division and Companies		*1993–94 Turnover* £m.	(%)
Broadcast TV		496.7	(35.4)
Carlton	(90%)		
Central			
Meridian	(20%)		
GMTV	(20%)		
ITN	(18%)		
London News Network	(50%)		
Video & Audio Production and Distribution		458.0	(32.6)
Technicolor (world's largest producer of pre-recorded video)			
Pickwick (creates, markets and distributes children's sports and music videos and albums)			
Film and TV services		267.5	(19.0)
Technicolor (world's largest processor of movie film)			
Post Production facilities for TV commercials and programmes, inc. special effects (London, Los Angeles, New York)			
Video and Sound Products		166.6	(11.9)
Quantel (image processing products, esp. for TV)			
Abekas (digital video effects equipment)			
Solid State Logic (audio mixing and editing equipment)			
ImMix (video workstations)			
Other		15.8	(1.1)
Books, electronic engineering			

Source: Carlton Communications Annual Report.

maximum entitlement of ITN. These acquisitions also made broadcast TV the largest part of Carlton's turnover (see table 5.2). Previously his American companies, such as Technicolor, had provided 60 per cent of his profits.

Neither Murdoch nor Maxwell, so prominent in the second half of the post-war period, fits the simple pattern of a non-media organization moving in or a media one moving out. Instead they show better the shifting balance within conglomerates between one media interest and another and, secondly, the trend towards internationalization. The arrival of Conrad Black illustrates the same points. Black in some ways simply followed the example of Roy Thomson, buying into Britain from a base in Canadian media. One difference between them, though, was that while both built their newspaper empires from nothing, Black

started with family wealth and education, eventually inheriting from his father, the chairman of Canadian Breweries, 22 per cent of the big Canadian holding Company, Argus.

Black started in newspapers, even so, with the tiny *Knowlton Advertiser* in Quebec. By the time he was approached as a possible investor in the Telegraph papers in 1985, he was a mogul in his own right – and a tough and skillful financier. The Telegraph papers became his key property, providing three-quarters of his overall publishing profits and fuelling the world-wide acquisitions which he continued to make (see table 5.3). These included the historic Fairfax group in Australia, the Southam group in Canada, and the Chicago *Sun-Times*. The *Daily Telegraph* editor described

Table 5.3 Conrad Black's media empire: Hollinger, 1994

	Press	*TV*	*Other*
Britain	*Daily Telegraph*	Carlton (5%)	Printing Companies
	Sunday Telegraph		
	Spectator		
Canada	Unimedia:		Printing Companies
	3 French dailies		
	16 weeklies		
	Religious books		
	Sterling Newspapers:		
	9 Dailies		
	Community papers		
	Southam Papers Group		
	Financial Post (20%)		
	Saturday Night (5%)		
USA	American Publishing Co:		
	133 Dailies		
	4 magazines		
	82 free sheets		
	Chicago Sun-Times:		
	Chicago Sun-Times		
	62 free sheets		
Australia	Fairfax Group (25%):		
	Sydney Morning Herald		
	Melbourne *Age*		
	Financial Review		
Other	*Cayman Islands News* (40%)		
	Jerusalem Post		

Note: Black's interests constantly change. This is intended only as an indicative list.
Sources: Various.

his editorial interest as somewhere between the interventionism of Lord Beaverbrook and the detachment of Roy Thomson. But the papers remained unquestionably Conservative. By 1990s standards he remained chiefly a newspaper proprietor, with well over 200 tiles to his name.

By the mid-1990s Murdoch was the mogul of moguls; a name synonymous on most continents with the power of communications industries to transcend national boundaries and policies. Always on the move, he was a predator, in the view of critics, buying up everything from TV sporting rights to Fijian newspapers. To admirers, by contrast, he was a creative innovator and developer of markets. At first he too had followed the Thomson path to Britain: no-nonsense colonial boy muscles into sleepy British business and starts raising the dust. After a tough takeover battle for the *News of the World* in 1968, financed by the profits of his Australian papers, Murdoch invigorated and streamlined the management, sold off various marginal activities (including Walton Heath Golf Course, allegedly purchased by the paper's one-time proprietor so that he could get to play golf there with Lloyd George, a member) and quickly bought the *Sun*. The move into LWT followed; then *The Times* Newspapers saga and the boosting of *Today*, followed by the gamble on Sky TV.

Murdoch's international side was symbolized by his vanishing sense of nationality. In person and style, he remained the down-to-earth Australian, caustic about the class-ridden antique snobberies of the 'poms'. Periodically he returned to his Australian roots, but for long periods he worked in the UK. Suddenly, however, he turned into an American citizen, a necessary formality if his expanding US empire was to remain legally his. From the 1970s on, he expanded first into US newspapers (the *New York Post*, for example, and later the *Boston Herald*) and then into film and TV, buying control of Metromedia and Twentieth Century Fox. Fox brought him the basis of a network to rival the three established giants; ownership of eight TV stations; a film studio which produced flops but also goldmines like *Home Alone*; and a massive archive to feed his channels world-wide.

Murdoch entered the 1990s gambling on the success of satellite TV. BSkyB nearly bankrupted him, but for a last-minute deal with 157 banks in 1991 to refinance his enormous debt (the size of Ecuador's). As Sky began to make an operating profit, Murdoch bought a Hong Kong-based satellite company, Star TV. This had a footprint across fifty-three

countries from Egypt to Japan, covering 2.7 billion people, more than half the world's population. His plans were set back by the Chinese government's refusal to co-operate, but there were huge markets elsewhere, including Malaysia and Indonesia. Through Star he also acquired half of an Indian channel, Zee TV. In Latin America, he expanded into cable TV. In Europe, he negotiated for Berlusconi's three TV channels in 1995, to add to his Spanish and German interests, and he withdrew only because he could not get full control. In the USA, he joined in 1995 with MCI, the second largest long-distance telephone company (20 per cent owned by BT), in a long-term scheme for delivering News Corp information and entertainment via MCI's digital network. In the UK, he controlled the decoders that were likely to dominate the coming digital TV market.

Table 5.4 Rupert Murdoch's media empire: News Corporation, 1994

Country (and % Revenue, 1993)	*Press*	*TV and Radio*	*Other*
Britain (18%)	*The Times* *Sunday Times* *Sun* *News of the World* *Today* Times Supplements *Shopper's Friend*	BSkyB (50%) Sky Radio (71%)	Harper/Collins publishers Transport Exhibitions Electronic Data Videocrypt Digital decoders
U.S.A. (68%)	*New York Post* *Boston Herald* *TV Guide* & other magazines	Twentieth Century Fox: 8 TV Stations plus affiliates	Film Studio Film Archive Electronic Data Harper/Collins
Australia/Pacific (14%)	*The Australian* 108 local/State papers 7 magazines (inc. *TV Week*)	Channel 7 network (15%)	14 printers (45%) Road and Air Transport
Asia	Thai newspapers	Star TV Zee TV (50%)	
Europe	Hungarian newspapers	Vox TV (Germany, 50%) Antenna 3 (Spain)	
Latin America		Cable TV (Mexico to Argentina)	

Note: Murdoch's interests constantly change. This is intended only as an indicative list. For example, the floating of BSkyB reduced Murdoch's holding to about 40 per cent.

Despite the Sky in the pie, Murdoch did not forget print. In 1989 he took control of the publishing conglomerate Collins in a bitter takeover battle, thereby acquiring a string of familiar imprints such as Fontana and Granada Books. Responding to the rise of the Republican right in the USA, he financed a new magazine there, just as he turned his British papers away from John Major and courted Labour's Tony Blair.

Murdoch retained some non-media interests, such as a share of the TNT trucking business. This had been a key element in the reorganization of newspaper distribution, associated with the transfer to Wapping and the battle against the 'old technology'. But his was largely a media conglomerate: the prime example of those distinctive features listed earlier: large in scope and scale, with modern management and a shifting and volatile balance of interests, which make any list such as table 5.4 out of date before it is even published. The volatility was exemplified in 1989 by his 20 per cent holding in the Pearson Group, which might have been the basis of a takeover bid but was sold again. It was shown in a different way by sales forced on Murdoch by US and Australian cross-ownership laws. In 1987 new Australian laws forced him to sell his Australian TV stations. In the USA, the Fox purchase, which included seven TV stations, obliged him to sell his New York and Chicago papers that circulated in those franchise areas.

The balance of Maxwell's group was rather different, with origins in printing and in magazine and trade publishing. The tortuousness of its complexities did not become clear until the whole edifice collapsed, amid a stink of fraud, within weeks after his death on 5 November 1991. Just how closely he kept control in his own hands, too, emerged at the trial of associates (including two of his sons) in 1995. The chart in table 5.5 is thus an object of some beauty – partly because it is a triumph of research for its compiler, Bronwen Maddox; partly because of its clues to the goals and methods of a rogue; and also because it symbolizes, in its resemblance to an electric wiring diagram, the intricacies of conglomerate organization.

Maxwell came quite late to newspapers, though not for want of trying: in 1968, for instance, he was a loser in the battle for the *News of the World*. The Mirror titles made him a Fleet Street figure to match his other interests. These included 20 per cent of Central TV and 15 per cent of Border; a cable station; and 25 per cent of the satellite music station MTV. Less noticeably, he founded the *European*, an improbable

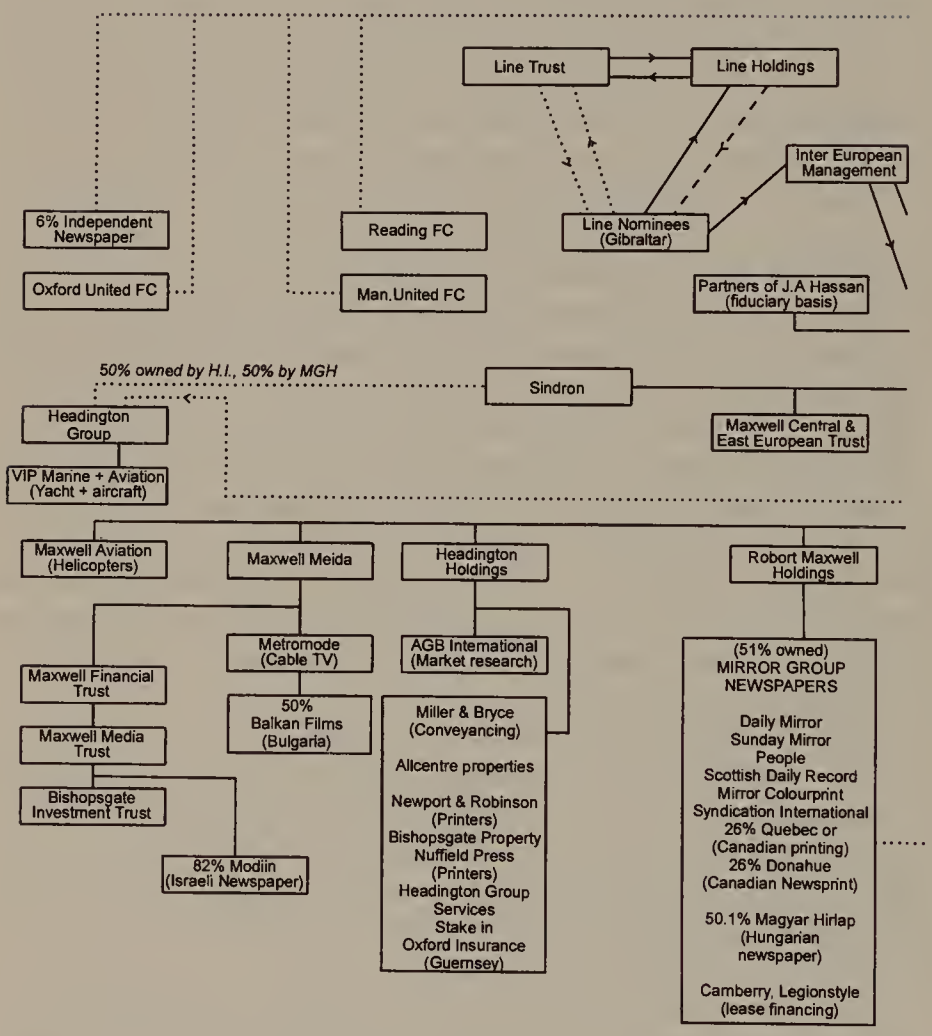
weekly broadsheet which nonetheless was a success and escaped closure after his death, when reclusive British property-owning twins domiciled in Monaco, the Barclay brothers, took it over. Overseas, an extraordinary range of media properties can be traced in the diagram, from Balkan Films in Bulgaria to the *Kenya News* and McGraw Hill Educational Books. In addition, there were myriad world-wide non-media interests, including three football clubs, investment trusts, lease financing, property – and the yacht from which he fell, *Lady Ghislaine*. Maxwell's own nationality symbolized, again, the international quality of his outlook. Despite an English-sounding name, he was born in central Europe and fought with distinction for the British in the Second World War.

Maxwell's collapse was precipitated by his inability to service huge accumulated debts amounting to some £3 billion, roughly the same value as his assets. They had been built up in the process of acquiring Macmillan publishers in the USA (which he bought at the top of the market for $2.6 billion), launching the *European* in 1989, propping up the New York *Daily News*, and much else. While he lasted, however, he played the media mogul with outsize enjoyment. Nicholas Coleridge describes him rallying *Daily News* advertisers ('This is Bob the Max'), baseball cap stuck on the back of his head (Coleridge, 1993). At the *Daily Mirror* he sacked people liberally and introduced full colour printing (ahead of the *Sun*). His own face was frequently on the front page. He enjoyed stunts, 'shock issues' and spilling out of the office for such publicity ploys as chartering planes to deliver famine relief in person to Africa.

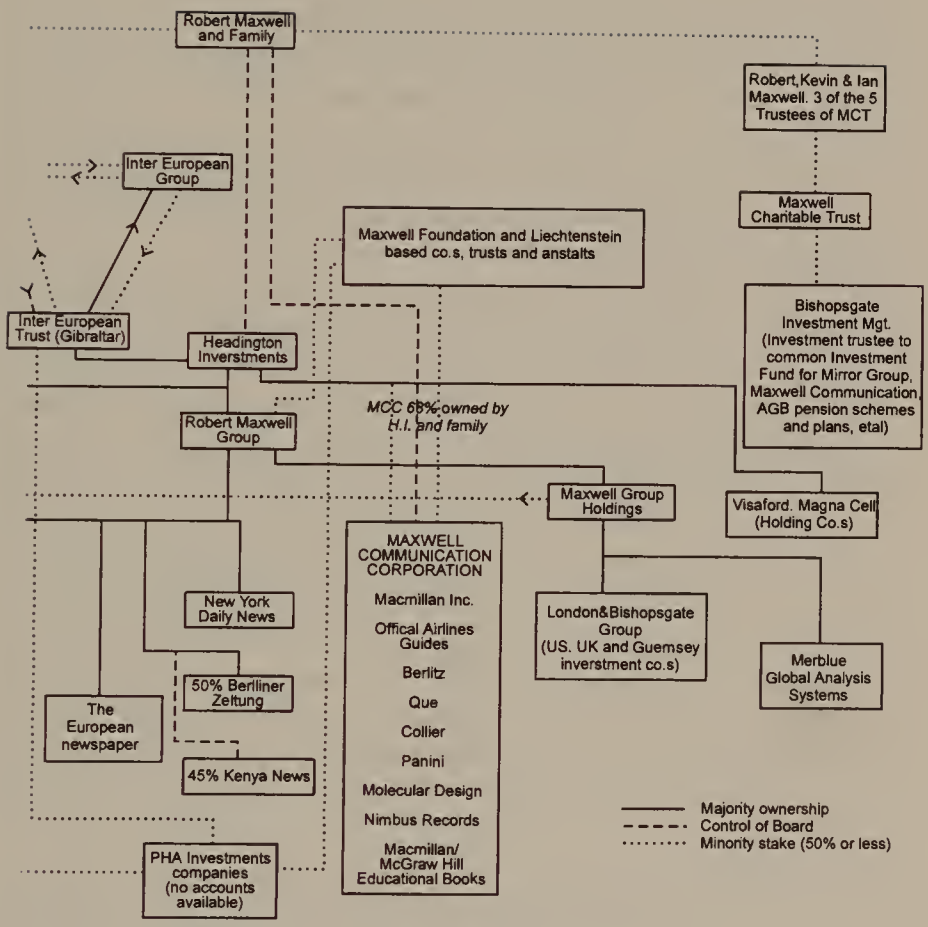
In the media jungle, Murdoch and Maxwell grew to be elephants. Over the period since 1945 as a whole, other beasts proved mammoths – of elephantine size but doomed to extinction. The Kemsley press empire was sold up. So, in turn, were groups such as Beaverbrook, with the *Telegraph* being the last. Companies at the core of TV groups, such as Rediffusion at Thames, lost their franchises. Film and cinema groups declined or were broken up.

Newcomers picked over the bones. In addition to the conglomerates already discussed, several press groups grew substantially. United Newspapers developed from a modest regional grouping to Fleet Street prominence, latterly under the leadership of Lord Stevens. United bought the *Express* papers when Trafalgar tired of them. By 1990 they controlled eight regional daily papers, nearly one hundred weeklies, and two large magazine and directory publishers – Benn Brothers and

Table 5.5 Robert Maxwell's corporate interests, 1991



Source: *Financial Times*, 6 November 1991. Compiled by Bronwen Maddox. Reproduced with permission.


Robert Maxwell and Family
Robert,Kevin & Ian Maxwell. 3 of the 5 Trustees of MCT
Inter European Group
Maxwell Chantable Trust
Maxwell Foundation and Liechtenstein based co.s, trusts and anstalts
Bishopsgate Investment Mgt. (Investment trustee to common Investment Fund for Mirror Group, Maxwell Communication, AGB pension schemes and plans, etal)
Inter European Trust (Gibraltar)
Headington Inverstments
MCC 68% owned by H.I. and family
Robert Maxwell Group
Maxwell Group Holdings
Visaford. Magna Cell (Holding Co.s)
MAXWELL COMMUNICATION CORPORATION
Macmillan Inc.
Offical Airlines Guides
Berlitz
Que
Collier
Panini
Molecular Design
Nimbus Records
Macmillan/ McGraw Hill Educational Books
New York Daily News
London&Bishopsgate Group (US. UK and Guernsey inverstment co.s)
Merblue Global Analysis Systems
50% Berliner Zeitung
The European newspaper
45% Kenya News
PHA Investments companies (no accounts available)
Majority ownership
Control of Board
Minority stake (50% or less)

Morgan Grampian. They also owned (and closed) the humorous magazine *Punch* and the financial information agency Exchange Telegraph (Extel), formerly a traditional news agency. EMAP (East Midlands and Allied Press) grew in a similar manner (including local radio) but without any national titles. The *Guardian*, too, turned into a significant media conglomerate. In addition to its existing string of magazines and local papers, in 1993 it won the *Observer* in a battle with the *Independent*. It bought 15 per cent of GMTV and 20 per cent of the local radio group TransWorld Communications. Most characteristically (just as its GMTV interest seemed rather startling), it owned the independent production company, Broadcast Communications, which had pioneered parliamentary broadcasting.

Outside the press, groups developed in the 1970s and 1980s from several directions. W.H. Smith, originally a nineteenth-century distributor, wholesaler and retailer, moved into TV (25 per cent of Yorkshire TV) and satellite TV services. Its book publishing activities expanded too. Thorn, formerly a manufacturer of electrical equipment, radio and TV sets, acquired the much larger EMI, long established as a major international recorded music, film and TV industry. Equally, names that no one had heard of emerged as important groupings. Richard Branson's Virgin Records, for instance, grew and diversified, including a successful foray into cheap transatlantic flights and national commercial radio. Crown Communications, owner of LBC, became one of the two large ILR conglomerates. It had interests also in computer graphics, TV and business film production and services. In 1989 it was the first British company to take a significant stake in French commercial radio. A little later it collapsed.

An account of the growth of international media conglomeration risks piling example on extravagant example, while the question, 'so what?' gets ignored. That question goes straight to the issues of media accountability raised in the introduction. At this stage, two points may be emphasized. One is the relevance of conglomeration to the very notion itself of 'media'. The conglomerates were commercial organizations. A few had a technical coherence: they were entirely press, or entirely electronic. Most did not. Where was their economic and functional coherence, beyond the simple claim that they served a market? Mostly, they were a product of the energy and inclination of their individual barons and of the sequence of expansionist opportunities those men had

made or seized. The second point is that a larger, more diverse and more integrated media system gave its controllers even more potential influence over everyday life than their predecessors. The press was historically linked to politics. Most of the modern media were not – or only indirectly. But this meant the new barons' influence might be unconscious or unremarked, and therefore all the more in need of holding accountable. The barons' international interests distracted them from British affairs; and so their involvement, when it came, might be ill considered.

Increasingly, then, governments recognized that media complexity was a problem. More difficult was the decision what the problem *was*. In the days when 'media concentration' meant little more than the gathering of several national papers in the hands of a Northcliffe or a Kemsley, the argument could be conducted in the language of party politics and monopoly capitalism. But when the term media itself was loose at the edges (not to mention the crumbling edges of the nation state), the game was more three-dimensional chess than flat-earth draughts. In 1995, as chapter 9 will show, the Conservative government illustrated these problems by its groping efforts to find a coherent policy about media cross-ownership.

6 Content and Audiences

Continuities

ITV researchers asked people in 1978 which of nine topics they thought should get more coverage, or less, in TV news and documentaries. Industrial news, Northern Ireland, immigrants' affairs? Yes, those were very important. So would they personally like to watch more about them? Well, as a matter of fact, no. The poll found a clear difference between what people thought should be available and what they personally wanted to watch.

That example shows as well as any the complicated relation between what is available in media, which bits people use, how much, what for, and with what satisfaction. The complexity is natural, given the prominence of media in daily life. Analysts, particularly in the advertising world, ceaselessly try to unravel it, to help clients sell their products in the best markets.

The issues are even more complicated if, as in this book, one is exploring developments through time and comparing different media. There is also the great puzzle, which is central to arguments over media power and accountability, about the direction of influence. How far have media contents followed audience taste and how far created it? The larger a programme's audience or a paper's readership, the more likely it seems that the content must in general be enjoyed, else why the large audience? Equally, though, taste in many subjects, such as fashion (clothes, design, music) also follows media.

This chapter can be no more than a combination of large generalizations and small examples, maybe unrepresentative. To start with, we may note certain obvious and important *continuities of content and*

audience between 1945 and 1995. *Advertising*, first, was crucial in various ways. For instance, it kept down the direct cost of media to the consumer. National daily papers got nearly half their revenue from advertising in 1970 and two-fifths in 1995. Provincial dailies got 60 per cent or more, and weekly papers 80 per cent, at both dates. For free sheets, of course, the direct cost to the reader was nil; and for ITV programmes, the viewer paid directly for the cost only of a TV set and electricity. Advertising made media cheap. On the other hand, one of the consequences of advertising finance was its strong impact on media contents. From the start, ITV programme scheduling was almost entirely determined, apart from the IBA's requirements, by the need to get advertising revenue (in its early years, one-quarter of ITV's money came simply from the great washing-powder war). The time, length, casting and sequence of programmes were all liable to be affected. The shape of programme, audience and advertiser all had to coincide. One simple factor played a major part in the calculations: time of day. Audience size (on radio too) was primarily determined by when a programme was broadcast. Peak-time, between roughly 6.00 pm and 10.00 pm, was the key to scheduling. Only with the introduction of subscription, notably for BSkyB, did an alternative to advertising as a source of funding for non-BBC TV become familiar to viewers.

The BBC never had to fit audiences to advertisers, but from 1955 it was in competition for its audiences with ITV. So a twice-weekly soap opera such as *EastEnders*, which started in February 1985, was as carefully researched as any commercial programme. It was the first BBC soap since *Z Cars* and *Compact* in the 1960s. Soaps, audience research had long shown, were not the kind of programme the public associated with the BBC. The idea for this one was proposed in 1981, specifically to boost the early evening weekday audience and help to build it for the rest of the evening. From telephone surveys and detailed representative group discussions, the planners developed the programme's shape – the neighbourhood, story line, characters – and launched it successfully four years later. After its first year it had the widest appeal of any soap opera. Many viewers were 'structuring their lives round it' and spoke of the characters as if they knew them well (BBC, 1986). The early evening audience gap between BBC1 and ITV fell from 20 per cent to less than 10 per cent.

In the launch of *EastEnders*, did content follow audience taste, or audience follow content? Clearly, there was a bit of both. The example

gives a glimpse too of the intricacies of scheduling and of the competition for audiences even when revenue was not directly a factor. The difficulty of getting these right, regardless of research, was shown in the correspondingly disastrous experience of the BBC's *Eldorado*. This was conceived as an audience-puller to replace a jaded thrice-weekly chat show hosted by Terry Wogan. It was contracted out, since *EastEnders* took up all the BBC's soap facilities. An entire mock village set, costing £1.5 million, was built on a Spanish hillside. Episode One on 6 July 1992 attracted 11 million viewers. Figures rapidly tumbled to 2.8 million. The producer (who had worked on *EastEnders*) left after a month. Figures climbed again, but the show became an embarrassing joke. In May 1993 the new head of BBC1 axed it.

For the press, the importance of advertising can hardly be overstated, though it was often indirect. It helped to start whole categories of publication, such as free sheets, Sunday paper colour magazines, and successive speciality magazines (yachting, autos, DIY, computing). Lack of advertising finished others, such as the illustrated weeklies *Picture Post, Everybody's* and *Illustrated.* A particularly sad death was that of the humorous magazine *Punch*, shortly after its 150th anniversary in 1991.

Advertising revenue helped shape national dailies – literally, by justifying the switch to a smaller tabloid format in which a 'full page' consumed less paper without a proportional decrease in revenue earned. It forced the closure of particular titles – the *News Chronicle, Daily Herald* and many other national and provincial papers with millions of satisfied readers. Once paper rationing ended in 1956, the size of papers swelled and slumped as fluctuations in advertising revenue paid for more or fewer pages. Within a paper, it influenced the space for different subjects. The big financial sections in the dailies owed more to the growth of appropriate advertising in the 1960s than to a surge of reader interest (especially, perhaps, at the *Guardian*).

What was very difficult to prove – but was much suspected, especially in the late 1940s, at the time of the first Press Commission – was that advertisers used their leverage to get favourable coverage and dampen criticism. Crude threats to withdraw advertising might at any time have been counter-productive. *The Observer* and *Guardian* were popularly believed to have lost revenue because of their opposition to the Eden government's Suez policy at the end of 1956, but other such cases are difficult to find. The Distillers' Company, makers of the deforming drug

thalidomide, withdrew their advertising from *The Sunday Times*, in which they were currently the largest advertiser, when *The Sunday Times* began its campaign in 1972 for better compensation for the drug's victims. This was presumably more in protest than in expectation that the campaign would be stopped (Evans, 1983, p. 93). Easier game for advertisers were feature subjects such as motoring, travel and holidays, where the latest models and resorts were hyped throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In those years, too, 'special supplements' became common among national dailies, in which articles about the special subject sat side by side with advertising matter.

In the provincial press, and especially the local weeklies, it is more difficult to believe that direct influence was rare. Would a local weekly, for example, launch an attack on the estate agency business or the standards of the second-hand car trade? The local press tended to be bland, and 'stirring things up', even in the angry years of the late 1960s, was the preserve of 'alternative' community newspapers.

The fear of direct influence by advertisers on programme content was one of the main planks in the opposition to ITV. Blood pressures rose at reports that US TV film of the Coronation in 1953 had been punctuated by ads featuring a chimpanzee, J Fred Muggs. The ITA was given tight control over the number, duration, placing and content of TV ads, which for most of the period were limited to an average of six minutes an hour. By 1994 it had been raised to seven minutes, with seven-and-one-half in peak time. Sponsorship was excluded. Political parties, religious organizations, charities and various commercial products were banned altogether. So, from 1965, by a government directive, were cigarettes.

Most of that was straightforward. Since ITV had the TV monopoly of advertising and 'editorializing' was not allowed, few anxieties surfaced about advertisers' influence on programmes. The Pilkington Committee was more concerned, for example, with the fifteen-minute programmes known as 'admags'. In these, well known actors and comedians plugged a variety of goods in the familiar setting of a shop or pub. They had a deliberate soap opera quality. One, *Jim's Inn*, became so popular that its cast produced an LP. Pilkington disliked the impression conveyed that these friendly personalities just happened to be recommending products as though they were disinterested parties. The programmes were banned by the government in 1963.

The difficult problems came, both for the IBA and for the BBC, from the growth of indirect sponsorship. From the 1970s onward equestrians leaped improbable heights at Wembley on mounts more likely called Sanyo Music Centre or Everest Double Glazing than Foxhunter or Dobbin. Cricket boundaries were ringed with advertising boards. Grand prix motor cars were painted up like buses to advertise cigarettes and even contraceptives. Sports sponsorship was the indirect way in to TV advertising. The 1990 Broadcasting Act changed the rules to allow a limited form of direct sponsorship, but this did nothing to affect the indirect forms.

A final point about advertising revenue – and of major importance – was that media to some extent competed for it between as well as among themselves. As a proportion of national consumer expenditure, advertising more than doubled between 1945 and 1995 so they competed for a growing purse. But not all TV's advertising was 'new' expenditure. As table 6.1 shows, the national press kept a remarkably steady share, falling rather slowly to 15 per cent. It was the magazine and provincial press sectors that suffered most, as TV's share wobbled upwards from 1 per cent in 1955 to more than 30 per cent since the 1980s.

Other 'continuities' from 1945 to 1995 are more briefly stated. *The division of the national press into 'quality' and 'popular' papers* was one of content as well as circulation, and it was itself largely a result of the higher advertising rates chargeable by the papers with readers who had more money to spend (not necessarily their own). In content, the difference was in range and detail, as well as in the proportions of the various subjects. Thus the 'qualities' covered a wider range of sports but gave them proportionately much less space overall than the populars. With foreign news the populars did less well on both counts. Such differences became even sharper with the contraction of the popular broadsheet papers after the death of the *Daily Herald* and *News Chronicle*.

The quality–popular distinction reflected also the characteristically English *divisions of social class* in newspaper readership. Throughout the period, each paper was read by two or more people in addition to its purchaser, depending on the definition of 'read'. This contributed also to persistent *readership duplication*, with the average middle-class reader in the 1960s still reading about 1.25 national dailies. There was also much overlap between the nationals and the provincial mornings and evenings.

Table 6.1 Distribution of advertising expenditure

	1948 (%)	*1952 (%)*	*1956 (%)*	*1960 (%)*	*1964 (%)*	*1968 (%)*	*1972 (%)*	*1976 (%)*	*1980 (%)*	*1984 (%)*	*1988 (%)*	*1992 (%)*	*1993 (%)*
National newspapers	14	16	19	20	21	20	18	17	17	17	15	15	15
Provincial newspapers	32	31	30	24	24	24	27	28	25	23	22	21	21
Consumer magazines	13	19	16	12	11	10	8	8	7	6	7	6	6
Business etc. magazines	16	16	11	10	9	9	9	9	8	8	10	9	9
Directories	–	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	5	7	7
Press production costs	8	6	7	5	4	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total press[a]	82	89	84	71	69	69	70	68	66	63	64	63	62
Television	–	–	6	22	24	26	25	26	27	31	30	31	32
Poster and transport	14	8	8	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4
Cinema	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	*	*	1	1
Radio	–	1	*	*	*	*	*	1	2	2	2	2	2
Total*	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* 0.5 per cent or less.

[a] Percentages are rounded and may not sum correctly.

Excludes Direct Mail advertising.

Source: Advertising Association.

Table 6.2 Readership of national daily papers: class profiles, 1956–1993/4

Newspaper	*Date*	*Percentage of each paper's readers in social class*			
		AB[a]	*C1*[b]	*C2*[c]	*DE*[d]
Financial Times	1966	56	29	11	3
	1976	47	34	11	8
	1986	56	30	9	5
	1993/4	61	28	7	4
The Times	1956	52	18	14	15
	1966	54	23	16	7
	1976	51	31	11	6
	1986	61	24	8	8
	1993/4	60	27	7	7
Independent	1993/4	55	30	8	7
Daily Telegraph	1956	51	28	13	8
	1966	42	33	17	8
	1976	43	36	13	7
	1986	54	29	11	7
	1993/4	55	29	9	7
Guardian	1956	46	27	16	11
	1966	47	27	18	8
	1976	40	39	13	8
	1986	50	30	9	12
	1993/4	54	30	9	8
Daily Mail	1956	21	23	29	27
	1966	19	24	30	27
	1976	15	34	28	22
	1986	26	30	24	20
	1993/4	30	35	19	16
Daily Express	1956	17	20	34	29
	1966	12	22	37	27
	1976	13	30	31	26
	1986	20	30	28	23
	1993/4	25	35	23	18
Population Aged 16+	*1956*	*14*	*18*	*34*	*34*
16+	*1966*	*12*	*19*	*36*	*33*
15+	*1976*	*12*	*24*	*32*	*32*
15+	*1986*	*17*	*23*	*28*	*32*
15+	*1993/4*	*21*	*27*	*24*	*28*
Today	1986	19	29	32	20
	1993/4	15	29	31	25
News Chronicle	1956	12	21	34	34
Daily Sketch	1956	9	19	38	33
	1966	8	14	43	35

Daily Mirror	1956	6	14	41	39
	1966	4	13	47	36
	1976	4	19	41	36
	1986	7	18	36	38
	1993/4	9	23	32	37
Sun	1976	3	18	42	36
	1986	7	18	35	41
	1993/4	7	23	32	39
Daily Herald/Sun	1956	4	11	44	41
	1966	3	14	46	37
Star	1986	4	14	38	44
	1993/4	5	20	35	39

[a] AB – professional, administrative, managerial;
[b] C1 – other non-manual;
[c] C2 – skilled manual;
[d] DE – semi- or unskilled manual.

Source: NRS. Percentages are rounded. Figures for 1993/4 are July–June.

Divisions of social class were less sharp than the size and format differences of the quality and popular papers. Until the decline of the 'middle market' broadsheets (*Daily Express, Daily Mail*, and so on), readership and social class matched quite tidily. In 1966, for instance, the class distribution of *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* readers, the two dominant middle market papers, with nearly two-fifths of the total readership, reflected very closely the class distribution of the population as a whole (see table 6.2). The quality broadsheets were heavily skewed towards the wealthier social classes with more formal education, and the tabloids were skewed in the other direction. Readership duplication and the extremes of circulation size add a surprising twist to these class divisions. Far more AB (upper middle class) people read the *Daily Mirror* than *The Times* or *Guardian* even though they were a tiny proportion of the total *Mirror* readership.

Similar comments could be made about the national Sunday press. Further differences between individual papers and periods can be seen in table 6.3. In general, there is no doubt that through the entire post-war period the readership of the national press reflected divisions of social class and education more distinctly than anything else – age, gender, religion, political attitude and so on. In discussions about 'choice', for instance, it would thus have been unrealistic to think of the number of alternative daily papers as growing from nine in 1945 to

Table 6.3 Readership of national dailies: sex, social class and age, 1966 and 1993/4

Newspaper	*Date*	*Readership (m)*	*Percentages of:*						*Gender*		*Ages of readers*		
			Men (%)	*Women (%)*	*AB (%)*	*C1 (%)*	*C2 (%)*	*DE (%)*	*Men (%)*	*Women (%)*	*15/16–34 (%)*	*35–54 (%)*	*55+ (%)*
Daily Express	1966	11.2	32	24	29	32	29	24	55	45	31	36	33
	1993/4	3.5	8	7	9	10	8	5	52	48	27	32	41
Daily Mail	1966	6.1	18	13	24	20	13	12	55	45	27	38	38
	1993/4	4.5	10	9	14	13	8	6	50	50	28	37	37
Daily Mirror	1966	15.5	43	34	14	28	49	42	54	46	40	38	22
	1993/4	9.0	22	18	8	17	27	26	54	46	36	32	32
Daily Sketch	1966	3.1	9	6	5	6	9	8	58	42	37	37	26
	1993/4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Daily Telegraph	1966	3.4	9	8	29	15	4	2	53	47	34	36	29
	1993/4	2.6	7	5	15	6	2	1	55	45	23	34	44
Financial Times	1966	0.4	2	1	5	2	•	•	73	26	31	44	24
	1993/4	0.7	2	1	5	2	•	•	72	28	37	45	19
Guardian	1966	0.8	3	2	8	3	1	1	60	40	38	39	23
	1993/4	1.3	3	3	8	3	1	1	55	45	39	39	21
Independent	1966	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	1993/4	1.1	3	2	6	3	1	1	62	38	45	38	16
Star	1966	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	1993/4	2.2	6	3	1	4	7	7	65	35	51	32	17

Sun	1966	4.3	14	8	3	8	14	13	61	39	31	37	32
	1993/4	9.9	25	19	7	18	29	30	55	45	44	31	24
The Times	1966	0.8	2	2	9	2	1	•	58	42	43	34	23
	1993/4	1.3	4	2	10	3	1	1	59	41	35	38	27
Today	1966	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	1993/4	1.8	4	3	3	4	5	3	55	45	40	38	22
Total readership	1966	45.8	132	98	126	116	120	104					
	1993/4	37.9	94	72	85	83	89	81					
Estimated population 16+	1966	40.1	100	100	–	–	–	–	48	52	33	35	32
Estimated population 15+	1993/4	45.4	100	100	–	–	–	–	48	52	36	32	32

Percentages are rounded.
* Under one per cent.
• Not yet tabloid
Source: IPA/JICNARS; NRS.

eleven in 1995. The well educated and well to do AB readers, 12–17 per cent of the population, were most likely to choose among some half a dozen papers. The much larger group of semi -or unskilled working class DE readers, 33 per cent of the population, plumped overwhelming for three or four.

Class differences also affected TV-watching. From 1955 onwards, working class people tended to watch more ITV programmes and middle class people more BBC. Satellite TV, too, made most impact in the 1990s initially with a working class audience. Working class audiences, in the same way, were the heaviest listeners to BBC Radio 1 and 2 and ILR stations, and middle class listeners made up two-thirds of the audience for BBC Radio 3 and 4.

A different kind of continuity was in *the nature of news*. There is no reason to suppose people were interested by different kinds of things in 1945 than in 1995 – or 1985, for that matter. Sex, crime and sport were staples of the nineteenth century. Academic studies have confirmed the obvious: events make news if they are clear, unusual, unexpected or unpredictable; if they fit a medium's cycle (a daily paper, for example, or an hourly news bulletin); if they involve well known people or groups, places or countries; if they are close to home (literally or figuratively); if they are negative (accidents) or reach a certain volume (in terms of numbers hurt, for example, or goals scored).

In competing for readers, papers supplied not contrasting contents but remarkably similar ones. As in other kinds of market, the trick in increasing market share was to supply a product *slightly* different from the one with which a customer was satisfied. Thus although news executives continued to value 'scoops', Tunstall found in the 1970s that among journalists themselves, it was more important not to come *last* with the news than to be first with it (Tunstall, 1971). Similarly, Murdoch's *Sun* in 1970 was a close copy of the *Daily Mirror*, whose readers he sought to poach. Matthews' new *Star* was in turn a close copy of the *Sun* in 1978. Overall, as the 1974 Press Commission observed, newspapers stuck to the same basic 'components', such as editorials, letters, sports and 'personalities' (McQuail, 1977, p. 31).

Radio and TV did not change those news values. Early worries that picture availability would make a story newsworthy in itself on TV did not persist. What changed, obviously, were the people and events that met the criteria as the years passed. Moreover, TV and radio were not

primarily *news* media, judged simply by the proportions of their output. They were increasingly good at breaking news fast, but their coverage was only a fraction of the newspapers', even measuring just the peak hours. The weight of TV output in practice was more comparable to the features content of the press.

Another way of looking at contents is by subject. Here, too, the *types of subject did not change dramatically*, considered in broad categories. The 1974 Press Commission noted a relative decline in the proportion of news in the national dailies between 1947 and 1975, but they attributed it to newsprint scarcity squeezing out features while rationing lasted. With certain exceptions, such as an increase in sport and a decline in foreign coverage, the more specific categories did not vary greatly either. In TV, the changes were greater (see below).

Difficulties of finding comparable data prevent detailed comparison of press contents from year to year. Tables 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6, therefore, present a patchy and summary picture. The pagination table (6.4) gives

Table 6.4 National daily newspapers: number of pages

Newspaper	*1937*	*1947*	*1956*	*1965*	*1975*	*1983*[a]	*1987*[b]	*1992*[c]
Daily Express	20	5	11	18	17	36[d]	41[d]	52[d]
Daily Herald/Sun	20	4	10	14	–	–	–	–
Daily Mail	19	5	10	17	34[d]	36[d]	41[d]	55
Daily Mirror	22	9	18	26	28	32	33	39
Daily Sketch/Graphic	?	?	17	20	–	–	–	–
Daily Star	–	–	–	–	–	29	30	37
Daily Telegraph	25	6	12	26	28	32	37	41
Daily Worker/Morning Star	8	6	?	4	6	?	?	?
Guardian	19	7	14	19	23	27	33	44
Independent	–	–	–	–	–	–	30	37
News Chronicle	20	4	10	–	–	–	–	–
Sun (from 1970)	–	–	–	–	28	31	32	44
The Times	26	10	17	21	26	28	43	47
Today	–	–	–	–	–	–	44	44

[a] Figures for May/June only.
[b] Figures for May/June only.
[c] Figures for March/April only, excluding Saturdays.
[d] Format now tabloid.

Sources: Royal Commissions on the Press; Seymour-Ure, *The Press, Politics and the Public* (Constable, 1968); D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1983* (Macmillan, 1984), *The British General Election of 1987* (Macmillan, 1988), *The British General Election of 1992* (Macmillan, 1992).

Table 6.5 National daily newspaper contents: 1947, 1965, 1975

	Editorial space (%)											
	News			*Features*			*Pictures*			*Other*		
Newspaper	*1947*	*1965*	*1975*	*1947*	*1965*	*1975*	*1947*	*1965*	*1975*	*1947*	*1965*	*1975*
Daily Express	50	32	32	16	13	16	6	9	8	7	6	2
Daily Graphic/Sketch[a]	35	35	–	14	18	–	25	19	–	7	9	–
Daily Herald[b]	52	40	–	15	16	–	5	13	–	7	6	–
Daily Mail	49	32	30	15	16	24	7	9	9	8	4	3
Daily Mirror	40	29	28	15	11	20	10	15	11	19	10	4
Daily Telegraph	45	31	37	11	9	12	2	6	5	7	2	1
Daily Worker/Morning Star[c]	45	50	52	23	21	26	3	15	14	10	6	–
Financial Times	–	–	44	–	–	16	–	–	2	–	–	3
Guardian	–	38	37	–	14	25	–	6	7	–	4	4
News Chronicle	53	–	–	13	–	–	7	–	–	6	–	–
Sun	–	–	31	–	–	19	–	–	11	–	–	3
The Times	41	46	39	7	11	16	3	5	4	9	4	4

Newspaper	Total Editorial Space 1947	1965	1975	Total Advertisements 1947	1965	1975	Total (each year)
Daily Express	79	61	58	21	39	42	100
Daily Graphic/Sketch[a]	81	81	–	19	19	–	100
Daily Herald[b]	79	75	–	21	25	–	100
Daily Mail	79	61	66	21	29	24	100
Daily Mirror	84	65	63	16	36	37	100
Daily Telegraph	65	48	55	35	52	45	100
Daily Worker/Morning Star[c]	81	92	92	19	8	8	100
Financial Times	–	–	65	–	–	35	100
Guardian	–	62	73	–	38	27	100
News Chronicle	79	–	–	21	–	–	100
Sun	–	–	64	–	–	36	100
The Times	60	66	65	40	34	35	100

[a] Renamed *Daily Sketch* in 1952.
[b] Renamed *Sun* in 1964.
[c] Renamed *Morning Star* in 1966.
Sources: Royal Commission on the Press, 1947; 1974–77; C. Seymour-Ure, *The Political Impact of Mass Media* (Constable, 1968).

Table 6.6 News in five national daily papers: 1947, 1965, 1975

Category	*Daily Express*			*Daily Mail*			*Daily Mirror*			*Daily Telegraph*			*The Times*		
	1947 (%)	*1965 (%)*	*1975 (%)*	*1947 (%)*	*1965 (%)*	*1975 (%)*	*1947 (%)*	*1965 (%)*	*1975 (%)*	*1947 (%)*	*1965 (%)*	*1975 (%)*	*1947 (%)*	*1965 (%)*	*1975 (%)*
Home news															
General[a]	25	26	18	27	32	20	24	32	17	32	36	24	30	28	25
Law, police, accidents	13	10	12	11	6	12	23	16	11	8	6	7	3	5	5
Sport	32	41	37	33	33	34	24	36	53	18	26	23	16	16	14
Other[b]	6	–[c]	8	9	–[c]	7	15	–[c]	8	6	–[c]	5	2	–[c]	3
Total home	76	77	75	80	71	73	86	84	89	64	68	59	51	49	47
External news															
Foreign	7	–[c]	5	6	–[c]	7	8	–[c]	3	7	–[c]	8	13	–[c]	10
International[d]	12	–[c]	11	10	–[c]	8	6	–[c]	7	19	–[c]	11	15	–[c]	13
Total external[e]	19	13	17	16	15	16	14	12	10	26	14	19	28	17	23
Financial, commercial, miscellaneous	4	10	9	4	13	10	*	3	1	8	17	21	20	33	30
Scientific and technical	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	*	1	1	*
Total[f]	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

[a] Includes political, social, economic, personalities, and so on.
[b] Included in 'General' in 1965.
[c] figures not calculated for this year.
[d] Includes international sport.
[e] Foreign and international news were not measured separately in 1965.
[f] Figures are rounded and do not all sum to 100. Pictures are excluded from the 1947 and 1975 figures.
* Less than 1 per cent.
Sources: Royal Commission on the Press, 1974–7; Seymour-Ure (1968) for the 1965 figures.

a rough indication of national dailies' increase in size (new type faces and better ink eventually meant more words per page). The heavier news emphasis in the quality papers and the picture content of the tabloids are clear in table 6.5. The news categories used by the 1947 Press Commission, which were followed for the 1975 analysis, were too general to show up many differences of detail, but are recorded in table 6.6.

The 1974 Press Commission studied samples of provincial papers too. These generally had a larger proportion of advertising, and the higher the circulation, the greater was the amount of classified rather than display ads, which was the opposite of the nationals. The amount of local news varied from one-third in metropolitan papers (*Birmingham Post*, *Yorkshire Post*) to 60 per cent or more in East Anglia and the West Country. At least one-quarter of the local news was sport, with crime and police stories the next largest. Foreign news was 5–10 per cent. The evening papers relied even more heavily on local news – from 60 to 75 per cent.

Tables can give some measure of quality–popular, broadsheet–tabloid and subject differences, but they are no help in other ways. In the 1980s, for instance, colour became common in the national press. Earlier, the colour magazine supplement to *The Sunday Times* (1961) was a landmark in Sunday journalism. (*The Observer* did not produce one until 1964.) Large Sunday papers, boosted by Thomson's classified ads drive at *The Sunday Times*, led to sectionalization, on American lines. This became universal among the broadsheet daily papers too in the 1990s. Some, such as the *Guardian* and the *Independent*, combined a broadsheet outer section with a tabloid inside. Saturday editions became especially elaborate, and they considerably outsold the midweek editions. In 1994 Saturday's seven-section *Daily Telegraph*, for example, sold perhaps 200 thousand more copies than the weekday paper.

Changing contents

The changing character of journalism – a paper's distinctive 'voice' – is more difficult both to discuss and convey. Much has sometimes been made, for example, of the *Daily Mirror's* rapport with its working class readers in the post-war years – the press equivalent of a cloth cap image (the cartoon character 'Andy Capp', ironically, was introduced when the period was ending). Under the instinctive guidance of Hugh Cudlipp

and others, with well established features and columnists, the paper was an articulate tribune for a class interest: 'Forward with the People!' said the mast-head. In the 1960s, long before its circulation dipped, that rapport had lessened, as the higher living standards and consumerist values of the 'affluent society' confused old certainties. 'The people had gone forward,' wrote Cudlipp. 'The question was, how to keep them there' (Cudlipp, 1962, p. 122).

The *Daily Express*, in contrast, had been the authentic voice of middle class England in the same period. In Arthur Christiansen it too had an inspirational editor and expert newspaper technician. His office bulletins became a fount of Fleet Street lore ('Always, always, tell the news through people,' for example). Editorially, the paper followed Lord Beaverbrook's idiosyncratic conservatism, but its columnists, cartoonists, sports commentators, share tipsters and foreign correspondents, all caught a mood of 1950s optimism.

It is not altogether fanciful to match moods to newspapers. To some extent, one is simply following circulation trends. While the *Mirror* and *Express* flourished, the *Herald* and its offspring *Sun* (pre-Murdoch) struggled, and the *Mail* lived in the shadow of the *Express*. On Sundays, the 1960s belonged to *The Sunday Times*. With circulation built on war memoir serializations, resources went into 'investigative journalism'. The other Sundays bounced in the wake. On weekdays, the *Guardian* thrived in a decade of Labour government reformism, while *The Times* struggled to modernize. In the 1970s, the *Sun* was the full-breasted leader. In the late 1980s the new *Independent* caught a mood, attracting readers and talented staff from the other broadsheets, all of which were either politically too engaged or otherwise out of touch with a significant section of the professional middle class. In the 1990s, the tabloids increasingly vied for market share with the kind of sensationalism and cheque book journalism that were the despair of quality journalists. Their confidence waned again, and the *Sun's* nudes moved to page five, perhaps to slip away for good. But then they revived, facing down the threats of privacy legislation. Too many politicians, part of the class from whom the threats chiefly came, were exposed (sometimes by tabloid methods) in personal or professional 'sleaze'. Even the royal family, whose privacy was mercilessly invaded by microphone and lense, turned out not to lead lives of such flawlessness as would categorically justify curbing tabloid intrusiveness.

Two further trends are worth including among such thumbnail sketches. In the quality press, first, the 1960s saw a great growth of specialization within public affairs journalism. Political, diplomatic and industrial specialists already existed. Not only did they multiply, with space now for reflection and analysis in addition to hard news, they were joined by education, economic, home affairs and social services correspondents, among others. Specific 'women's pages' were started: in the *Mail*, it was a 'Femail' section. The trend also belatedly reflected the increased scope of government intervention in the economy. The movement was not all one way. Foreign correspondents, for instance, dropped sharply. Papers relied increasingly on locally based stringers and news agencies. The very large costs of keeping their own staffers in foreign capitals were no longer justifiable, when British interests were a relic of their former importance.

The decline of anonymity, outside the leader columns, is also worth noting. Anonymity lasted until 1967 in *The Times* and for nearly as long in parts of the other quality papers. With a byline, an article becomes personal. How far the personality then intrudes and colours style and substance, is a matter of degree. In a world of TV, anonymous journalism probably could not have survived: when we see a face, we want a name (besides, print journalists were needed as guests on TV current affairs shows). At *The Times*, the change was signalled by the appointment as columnist of Bernard Levin, a writer whose highly distinctive voice, originally anonymous in the *Spectator*, could not 'unnamed' have stood regular exposure in a daily paper. Anonymity, like the uniforms of nurses or the police, highlights the role, not the person performing it. In journalism, it therefore bolstered the idea of objectivity in reporting the news. Its disappearance fitted an era in which electronic media were taking over the 'hot' news role and papers were selling the personal expertise of their staff at interpretation, comment, analysis, more than for traditional hard news.

Other aspects of press content are best discussed in common with TV and radio. First, TV itself needs attention. Tables 6.7 and 6.8 summarize BBC and ITV programming at ten-yearly intervals. (Differences of definition and compilation make comparisons highly unreliable). The enormous increase in broadcast hours is easy enough to observe. The BBC started in 1946 with an average of 28.5 hours a week, generally from 3.00–4.00/4.30 pm and 8.30–10.00 pm. When ITV started, both

Table 6.7 Weekly programming on ITV, 1956–94

	1956		1966		1976		1986				1994			
							ITV		Channel 4		ITV		Channel 4	
	(hrs/mins)	(%)	(hrs/mins)	(%)	(hrs/mins)	(%)	(hrs/mins)	(%)	(hrs/mins)	(%)	(hrs/mins)	(%)	(hrs/mins)	(%)
News and news magazines	3.15	7	4.39	7	10.01	11	11.01	10.5	4.02	5.5	19.34	13.6	9.36	6.7
Current affairs						–	–							
Documentaries, arts	3.56	8	7.15	11	11.41	13	11.36	11	16.35	22	5.42	4	8.54	6.2
Religion	1.05	2	3.15	5	2.28	2.5	2.31	2.5	1.39	2.25	2.21	1.6	1.03	0.7
Adult education	–	–	3.15	5	3.06	3	1.51	1.75						
School programmes	–	–	4.22	7	5.22	6	6.50	6.5	7.56	10.5	3.35	2.5	21.31	15.0
Pre-school programmes	–	–	–	–	1.42	2	3.35	3.5						
Children's 'informative'	1.08	2	0.50	1	1.33	1.5	2.12	2	–	–				
Other Factual	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	12.58	9.0	3.40	2.6
Total 'informative'	9.24	19	23.36	36	35.53	39	39.36	37.75	30.12	40.25	44.10	30.7	44.44	31.2
Plays, drama series, serials, TV movies	13.05	28	16.17	24	21.35	23	26.21	25	16.05	21.5	50.21	35.0	37.02	25.9
Feature films	1.15	3	6.35	10	9.44	10.5	8.18	8	11.45	15.5				
Entertainment and light music	14.36	31	7.38	11	10.03	11	14.29	13.75	11.00	14.5	23.03	16.0	30.52	21.6
Sport	2.13	5	6.12	9	8.38	9	9.00	8.75	6.07	8.25	9.03	6.3	12.18	8.6
Children's entertainment	6.27	14	6.21	10	7.02	7.5	7.24	7	–	–	12.54	9.0	15.48	11.1
Other	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4.34	3.0	2.02	1.4
Total all programmes	47.00	100	66.39	100	92.55	100	105.15	100	75.16	100	144.05	100	142.46	100
Breakfast TV (TV-AM)	–		–		–		21.0				23.55			

Sources: IBA Yearbooks and ITC Annual Report. Figures are averages of the various ITV companies. Categories may vary, particularly between 1986 and 1994.

'Other' includes 1.07 hrs/mins. of multicultural programmes on Channel 4.

Table 6.8 Annual programming on BBC television, 1956–94

	1955–6		*1965–6* hours				*1975–6* hours				*1985–6* hours				*1993–4* hours			
	hours	*(%)*	*BBC1*	*BBC2*	*Total*	*(%)*	*BBC1*	*BBC2*	*Total*	*(%)*	*BBC1*	*BBC2*	*Total*	*(%)*	*BBC1*	*BBC2*	*Total*	*(%)*
News	149	6	172	147	319	5	232	156	388	4	410	51	461	4	1,119	235	1,354	10
Newsreel and documentation films/outside broadcasts	107	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Talks, demonstrations & documentary programmes	634	25	483	265	748	13	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Current affairs, features and documentaries	–	–	–	–	–	–	841	781	1,622	19	1,458	992	2,450	23	1,129	1,384	2,513	19
Drama	245	10	408	273	671	12	311	182	493	6	295	144	439	4	399	135	534	4
Light entertainment	332	13	277	126	403	7	335	154	489	6	518	217	735	7	509	242	751	6
Religion	33	1	145	5	150	3	126	11	137	2	156	10	166	2	95	34	129	1
Sport	301	12	682	264	946[a]	16	641	408	1,049	12	761	773	1,534	14	657	963	1,620	12
Entertainment films	115	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
British and foreign feature films and series	–	–	495	332	827	14	843	484	1,327	16	849	854	1,703	16	1,259	1,349	2,608	20
Children's	395	16	321	113	434	8	594	123	717	8	753	20	773	1	853	242	1,095	8
Music (including opera & ballet)	102	4	43	93	136	2	28	116	144	2	16	126	142	1	21	53	74	1
Schools	–	–	385	–	385	7	304	137	441	5	–	512	512	5	–	530	530	4
Further education	–	–	140	93	233	4	359	–	359	7	290	982	1,272	12	125	841	966	7
Other	113	5	369	278	647	10	304	137	441	5	184	198	382	4	390	511	901	7
Total hours[b]	2,526	100	3,920	1,979	5,899	100	4,857	3,624	8,481	100	5,690	4,879	10,569	100	6,566	6,519	13,085	100
Average hours per week	49		75	38	113		93	70	163		109	94	203		126	125	252	

Definitions vary from year to year.

[a] Includes outside broadcasts, not all of which were sport.

[b] Percentages rounded and do not all add to 100.

'Current Affairs' include parliamentary broadcasting in 1993–4.

Source: BBC textbooks and Annual Reports.

channels were limited to 50 hours a week and not more than 8 on any one day. There were 'closed periods' from 6.00–7.00 pm on weekdays, Sunday mornings, and from 6.15–7.30 pm on Sunday evenings. These are a nice reminder of the anti-social intrusiveness attributed to the new medium (rather like Sunday morning lawn-mowing).

For the BBC, increased news did not mean more income. The cost of filling BBC2's hours, one must remember, had to be met from increased licence fees (controlled by the government), marginal economies and earnings from co-productions and sales abroad, and increasingly from the larger fee charged for a colour licence. Colour was introduced in 1967, on BBC2.

More hours did generally mean more advertising revenue for ITV, and the companies frequently pressed the government for expansion. In 1972 restrictions were lifted. ITV and BBC1 were both soon broadcasting some 13 hours a day (the main change being an extension of afternoon hours) – double the amount 20 years earlier. Breakfast time TV and Channel 4 doubled them again, so that by the late 1980s each network was putting out 200 hours a week. Viewers thus went from a choice of less than 30 hours a week in 1946 to more than 400 in the late 1980s. By 1990 you could watch terrestrial TV round the clock. If you were willing to subscribe to satellite or cable, of course, your choice was even greater.

The programme categories in tables 6.7 and 6.8 reflect the broadcasters' need to demonstrate that they were 'informing, educating and entertaining'. The tables give an idea also of the kind of programming that was practical in the early days. 'Talks' and 'demonstrations' suggest the camera eavesdropping, as though in a lecture hall. 'Newsreels' copied the magazine style of the old cinema newsreels; they were not yet bulletins of latest news. 'Outside broadcasts' are reminders that for years TV was a cumbersome medium, happiest in the studio or on set piece occasions such as the Cup Final, which could be planned well in advance. There were very few feature films, because of competition with the cinema.

Ten years on, more of the familiar categories were in place. ITV's early schedules were dominated by 'entertainment'. 'Quiz shows with glittering prizes, fast-moving adventure series, drama series and soap operas and spectacular live variety, gave a new look to British TV', recalled one IBA executive (David Glencross, 1985). The names reson-

ate, even when their shelf life has finished: *Take Your Pick, Double Your Money, Emergency Ward Ten, The Avengers, Coronation Street* (still running in 1995), *Sunday Night at the London Palladium.* The differences in BBC and IBA programme categories do not conceal the contrast in those years between the 'serious' (equals 'less popular') scheduling of BBC TV and the 'entertainment' (equals 'popular') bias of ITV.

In retrospect, ITV justified its programmes, blatantly at odds with the intention of the policy makers, as the price necessarily paid to get the new system running. Certainly, as we have seen, it was no easy task, especially with a controlling body, the ITA, that *was* an Authority without as yet *possessing* authority. The regional bias of the system, too, worked against coordination in the early days. Nevertheless, these were years in which ITV helped TV as a whole to acquire the stigma of an 'idiot box'.

In 1962 the Pilkington Committee slammed ITV. Its criticisms could easily be dubbed 'elitist' (not in fact a vogue word at that time), but they boiled down to the traditional media dilemma about how far people know what they 'want' until they have been shown choices beyond their existing experience. From the persuasive pen of Committee member Richard Hoggart, himself a working class man who had seized the opportunities of formal education, the critique flowed powerfully. The government not only gave the second TV channel to the BBC but slapped the excess profits levy onto ITV. The levy reduced the profit-maximizing incentive (thereby encouraging companies such as Granada to diversify out of TV) and indirectly helped the ITA to enforce the Television Act's requirements of programme quality and balance.

The Authority's grip grew progressively firmer. The result was a gradual convergence of programming between ITV and BBC. From the 1970s, ITV executives would note with a mixture of exasperation and glee that highly popular – but also esteemed and award-winning – ITV series were frequently mistaken for BBC products. *Upstairs Downstairs, World at War, Edward VII* (in the 1970s); *Brideshead Revisited, Jewel in the Crown* (1980s); *Inspector Morse* (1990s) – all were ITV programmes that set the elitists purring. They went out, of course, alongside the likes of *Opportunity Knocks, The Golden Shot, Crossroads* and *Emmerdale Farm.* By the 1980s the BBC too had *Blankety-Blank* and *EastEnders.* But, even so, viewers in 1987 still perceived ITV as better at quiz and game shows, entertainment and variety, adventure and police series, comedy and

feature films; while BBC was the network for talk and chat shows, plays, science and nature, drama, documentaries and sport.

Even allowing for some massaging of programmes into 'serious' categories, ITV's progressive seriousness saw a halving of its 'entertainment' schedules. 'Informative' content was much boosted by the intrinsically serious nature of Channel 4. Much earlier than that, however, an important part was played by the rise of news and current affairs. BBC was traditionally strong in these areas (classic 'public service broadcasting' territory), but with the introduction of ITN's *News at Ten* on 3 July 1967, ITV broke new ground. This was TV's first half-hour news bulletin, and something of which Pilkington could have been proud, since research had shown in 1966 that 83 per cent of viewers were perfectly content with the traditional fifteen minutes at 8.55 pm.

News at Ten quickly became so popular that the companies built their evening scheduling round it. For TV news it was a symbolic moment. The BBC extended its own 9.00 pm bulletin. News was no longer an illustrated supplement to radio and newspapers. Newscasters worked as journalists and interviewers, not just announcers. Satellite transmission soon added immediacy and a much extended range of sources and material. 'The news' became less of a bulletin and more an integrated programme of 'reporter packages', capable of delivering large audiences in peaktime. In due course, colour, electronic news-gathering (an ITV innovation) and computer graphics would also add to the service. The growth of broadcasting hours made opportunities for lunchtime news in 1972 and an extended early evening news in 1976, with similar BBC expansion and a distinctive approach from Channel 4. More and more people came to see TV as their prime source of news.

A second factor drawing BBC and ITV together was the advance of programme people – producers and editors – into senior management posts at ITV, superseding the 'merchant venturer swashbucklers' of the first phase. The franchise changes of 1967/8 and 1980 confirmed this. Some of the talent were home grown, but others, including Michael Peacock of LWT fame and Jeremy Isaacs of Thames and Channel 4, came across from the BBC, where programmes such as *Tonight* (founded in 1957) had been famous nurseries of talent. ITV increasingly could pay better salaries too; but the movement, of course, went in both directions, and the 1980s ended with a Director-General of the BBC, John Birt, recruited (as Deputy Director-General) from LWT.

One of the main differences between BBC and ITV programming envisaged in 1955 was an ITV regional bias. This was largely nullified by the almost immediate institution of the network system. This, again, was justified by necessity. The ITA was persuaded in 1956 that unless the four major companies had guaranteed access to a national market for so many hours a week, the whole system might fail. In essence, each of the four agreed to contribute a quarter of the programmes and to show the three-quarters contributed by the other three in its own region. The smaller companies took (and paid for) the network programmes, and contributed a modest share, but they had no say in programming decisions.

The only 'regional' element in the arrangement was that three of the network companies (Granada, Central and Yorkshire) out of the five (since Yorkshire joined in 1968) had a base outside London; so that Granada's *Coronation Street*, say, had 'authentic regional accents' (quite an innovation in their time) and escaped a metropolitan bias.

By 1985 the five network companies were producing 45.5 per cent of the ITV programmes, amounting to more than 40 peak or near-peak hours a week. The 10 smaller companies produced 9.25 per cent for the network and 7.75 per cent for showing in their own regions, where the IBA required up to 7 hours a week of 'local interest'. These companies' contribution lent itself to comparatively inexpensive, specialized programmes, such as science and religion. From the start Anglia specialized in drama and Southern in children's education (ahead of the BBC).

The network system evolved into a complex and allegedly acrimonious business of bargaining in weekly meetings of the five major companies and the IBA, under the umbrella organization of the Independent Television Companies Association. The IBA's increasing concern for programme standards and balance, plus pressure from the smaller companies that rightly felt they had more and more production potential to offer, added to the complications. Channel 4 eased the pressure for space, but also led to more programmes competing for it. In 1987, the small companies were given greater access and the number of network hours was reduced by about a quarter.

These developments were reflected in changes made by the 1990 Broadcasting Act. In January 1993 a Network Centre came into existence, with a budget of £540 million from the ITV companies for its first year, to spend on commissioning programmes. Its director, Marcus

Plantin, was thus an extremely powerful figure. He had a decisive influence over prime time scheduling and a key role in commissioning work from the independent production companies. If ITV seemed to be chasing too far down market for ratings, or to lose out to the BBC, he would be the focus of criticism. The Centre's policies remained under the control of its owners, the ITV franchise-holders; but now there was in principle a level playing field for everyone wanting to compete for a programme contract. Excluding daytime programmes, 40 per cent of programme hours commissioned in 1994 were contracted to independent producers.

Many other features of TV programming, obviously, could be pointed out. Many of them would be as much a record of the times as of TV's part in them. TV missed the end of Empire, except for little bits like the Argyll Highlanders' steamy evacuation from Aden in 1967, but it caught the Vietnam War, the Nigerian Civil War, and so much as it was permitted (not much) in the Falklands in 1982. Nine years later, technology had advanced so far that keeping TV out of the Gulf War was effectively impossible. More than any before, the Gulf War was a 'TV War'. More peacefully colour TV transformed the fortunes of games such as snooker and transfixed the viewers of Wimbledon. The growth of controversy and public affairs programming is discussed below.

TV drama started with the BBC pointing a large camera at a small stage. Technical and financial improvement saw the virtual elimination of live performances (regretted by some people); immeasurable increases in the quality of settings, costumes and production generally; the commissioning of plays written specifically for TV (much encouraged by Sidney Newman's ITV 'Armchair Theatre' in the 1960s and BBC series such as 'Play for Today' and 'The Wednesday Play'); and the discovery, with the *Forsyte Saga*, that audiences would happily get hooked on serialization of literary classics (and not-so-classics). With film, similarly, TV at first was starved, then it did the deals bringing more feature films more quickly to the screen. Lastly, 'made for TV' movies developed.

All such developments, along with the increasing amount of airtime, put pressure on the capacity – and the justification – for limiting programme production to the BBC/ITV duopoly. By the late 1980s this was ending. The longstanding quota of 14 per cent on foreign imports

was still in place, but Channel 4 was buying a quarter of its programmes from independent companies, and the BBC was moving in the same direction. These arrangements were formalised in the 1990 Broadcasting Act, which imposed a minimum 25 per cent 'independent' quota – and also a requirement for material of 'European' origin.

As TV poured over the surface of everyday life its programmes made fewer and fewer concessions to pre-existing forms, institutions, media, manners. TV made plays, told the news, taught school, increasingly on its own terms, not as a parasite, imitator or tolerated intruder concealed as a hat-stand. As was pointed out earlier, it responded to popular taste, observing new taboos about racism and sexism, just as it helped demolish old ones of sexual modesty and obscene language. But common to all programming, on any channel, was an eventual confidence in the distinctive value of the TV medium. Well before 1995, TV did not need to make excuses for itself. Another aspect of this self-confidence is that TV was increasingly judged by its own standards, not by those of traditional forms and media such as film, theatre and literature. Thus the 1990 Broadcasting Act stressed that chat shows and quizzes, for instance, could be of high quality in their own right. Even so, it was easy to be gloomy about the new era of competition. Franchise holders who were 'broadcaster contractors' had little incentive to invest in training or production facilities. Experienced programme-makers were quick to detect the arrival of 'tabloid television'. This included obviously cheap and eye-catching programmes (including more sex and sensationalism). But it involved the fear also of an excess of 'formulaic' drama and comedy series, with star actors and actresses regarded as 'profit centres', for whom appropriate marketable vehicles (that is, programmes) must be found. For example, John Thaw, an immense success in *Inspector Morse*, was arguably miscast in the subsequent unsuccessful BBC 1 series, *A Year in Provence*. Writers similarly feared a new hesitancy among broadcasters to take risks with original ideas. The ITC annual programme reviews in 1993 and 1994, as chapter 4 indicated, gave support to some of these fears.

The notion of quality also needed to adjust to the effective end of duopoly. Reithian ideas of mixed channels, which would expose the audience willy-nilly to a variety of programming, had no place in the satellite era. The majority of satellite channels derived their attraction precisely from being specialized – movies, sport, country music, cartoons,

erotica, even Parliament. Moreover Sky moved rapidly to buy the rights to major sporting events, compromising the public service principle of 'universal access' for viewers – a reduction of quality indeed, if one now had to pay extra to see test match cricket, for instance.

One unavoidable consequence of TV's omnipresence was its impact on the contents of other media. Some of the earliest TV 'panellists', who would later have been chat show hosts but were regulars on games like *What's My Line?* in the restricted TV hours of the 1950s, were well known columnists in the popular dailies. Gilbert Harding and Nancy Spain were two early examples. At first TV drew on established reputations in the press; later, the press wooed contributors from TV.

The mingling of media personnel paralleled contents *about* different media. Soap opera characters, often blurred with the actors who played them, were a staple of the tabloid press. Programmes such as *What the Papers Say* dissected Fleet Street. TV rows with politicians, a growing practice, made newspaper headlines. TV criticism, initially a job for the plain man or woman, became an important part of quality paper arts pages and made or attracted star journalists such as Clive James. Evening and weekend papers gave lots of space to programme schedules. Sporting stars pounded track, tennis balls or each other one minute and appeared on screen the next – or in celebrity quiz and talk shows later on. News stories overlapped: morning paper headlines took account of the previous evening's radio and TV stories, and the electronic media picked up items from the daily press (all these developments, indeed, applied to radio as well as to TV).

By the early 1970s mixed-media tie-ins and marketing of records, TV series and books were well developed and would increase. They had a major international dimension, as TV programmes were made for overseas markets, books were packaged for mass readership, feature articles were syndicated worldwide. They ranged from the modest puffing of his travel book by a visiting American author on Radio 4 to the screening of pre-launch films about the making of big budget movies such as *Gandhi*. Little in these practices was new, but they became endemic.

A final question raised by the probable influence of TV is how far some newspapers should go on being defined as *news* papers. To take the extreme contrast, can the *Financial Times* and the *Daily Star* be treated

as comparable products? If news is something which you did not know yesterday and will have diminishing interest if you do not know it today, then much of the content of a tabloid daily in 1995 was not news. Much, certainly, was not fiction, but nor was it in the ordinary sense recognizable to most readers as truth, capable of being related to everyday experience. Stories dwelt on the lives of the super-rich: royalty; movie, soap and pop stars; elite sports players. These people often had international lifestyles, as distant from readers as the planet Zirkon. Coverage of public affairs, further, was attenuated, in comparison with earlier decades, to the point were truth, again, involved necessary oversimplification and compression. Overall, the tabloid press described a world not of truth as conveyed in the broadsheet press, but of fantasy – skillfully and often arrestingly presented, but arguably fitting the conventional description of a 'magazine', not a 'newspaper'.

Audiences

Content analyses show only what was available. But how and why did people use the media? What difference did TV make? The short answer is that people's *motives* for using media do not seem to have changed much from 1945 to 1995 – whether to combat loneliness, find out what was going on or just relax. But people did not persistently use the same media in the same way.

How much time people spent watching TV depends on the definition of 'watch'. Until the Annan Committee knocked BBC and ITV heads together and made them run a joint system of audience measurement, ITV relied mainly on counting the number of sets switched on and the BBC used sample surveys and audience 'diaries'. Audience measurement was part of the duopoly's competition. The ITV figures were aimed at advertisers, the BBC's at programme planners and, ultimately, protecting the licence fee.

By any measure, obviously, TV-watching was the key development of the period, growing from nil to more than 26 hours per head of the population per week (tables 6.9 and 6.10). It grew in two ways: initially, as more people got TV sets, and then as programme hours increased. The growth was rapid, then gradual, and from the 1970s onwards it fluctuated. In 1970, 75 per cent of the population saw TV at some point

Table 6.9 Time spent on TV and radio, 1961–94

Years	*Hours/minutes per head of population per week*	
	TV	*Radio*
1961	13:30	7:00
1966	13:50	7:30
1971	15:34	8:48
1976	17:43	8:49
1981	18:08	9:17
1986	25:54	8:40
1991	26:04	10:27
1993	25:41	16:27
1994	25:12	16:14

These averages conceal wide seasonal variations.
Sources: BBC; BARB/AGB.

Table 6.10 Time spent on TV, radio and newspapers, 1975

Average weekday time	*TV viewing (%)*	*Radio listening (%)*
None	3	16
Under 1 hour	7	29
1–3 hours	44	31
3–5 hours	32	11
5 hours or more	14	13

Average time per issue, by regular/occasional readers	*National dailies (%)*	*Provincial mornings (%)*	*Provincial evenings (%)*	*Local weeklies (%)*
Less than 15 minutes	16	15	16	13
15–30 minutes	22	26	22	18
30–60 minutes	34	35	35	35
1–2 hours	21	19	22	23
2 hours or more	7	5	5	11

Sources: Royal Commission on the Press 1974–7.
Respondents were aged 16 or over.

during the day and in 1986 the figure had not risen much further to 78 per cent. This was fewer than the number of people looking at a daily newspaper. By 1990 it was up to 90 per cent. If viewing was considered by the week, moreover, TV was virtually universal: fewer than one person in ten did not see something in an average week in 1993.

Table 6.11 Homes with more than one TV set

	1979	*1981*	*1983*	*1985*	*1987*	*1989*	*1991*	*1994*
Homes (%)	*24*	*34*	*46*	*55*	*57*	*57*	*57*	*67*

Source: IBA/ITC.

Viewing increased more with new broadcasting hours, such as afternoon TV in the early 1970s and breakfast time in the early 1980s, than with more channels and programme choice or technical improvements such as colour (colour licences overtook black and white in 1976). The idea of 'saturation' was implicit also in the fact that although multiple set households increased steadily through the 1980s (table 6.11), only one set at a time was generally switched on. Typically, a second (or third) set was in a bedroom or kitchen. They were a substitute for lugging the TV around, and they also reflected the growth of video games and home computers.

TV rapidly became the most time-consuming medium. This fact alone implies that it was not an exhausting activity but was used for relaxation and entertainment. In 1961 it was already overwhelmingly the nation's 'main activity' in the evening, and the BBC study establishing that fact produced much the same figures when repeated in 1975 (BBC, 1976). An ITV study in 1966 found TV easily the most popular leisure activity, followed by 'entertaining friends' and 'reading newspapers and magazines'. Pubs, clubs and sport were right down the list. Watching televised sport was by far the most popular activity on Saturday afternoons (51 per cent of men, 34 per cent of women) (IBA, 1967). The government's annual *Social Trends* figures show sport the only serious rival to TV among the young, and gardening and DIY among the middle-aged (especially men).

TV stole its time from radio. Radio's peak hour audience (6.00 pm to 11.00 pm) dived from 35 per cent of the population in early 1947 to about 4 per cent in the early 1960s. The crossover year was 1955, when radio and TV each had half the audience, both with 15 per cent. Radio fluctuated thereafter more than any other medium. Within a generally low level, there were short-run increases in listening hours, from 7.5 per week in 1966 to 9.2 in 1972, for instance, and a major increase from the late 1980s. Radio's 'reach' declined similarly. In 1970 52 per cent of the population listened at some point during the day, but only 47 per cent in 1991. Those who did listen tended to listen more. There were more

radio sets than people in Britain in the 1990s (like sheep in New Zealand). Radio, in general, became *par excellence* the medium used while doing something else, mainly housework, preparing and eating meals and getting up or ready for bed. Fewer than a quarter described themselves as 'just listening' in a 1971 survey.

TV's effect on newspaper reading was less obvious. 'Reading' a paper is a varying and imprecise activity anyway. (Does doing the crossword count? What if you are watching TV at the same time?) Early studies suggested TV did reduce the time spent reading a paper. But researchers continued to show people spending large amounts of time at it. The average man read his paper for 69 minutes a day, according to an IPC survey in 1972–3, and the average woman for 47 minutes. Similarly, 4 per cent of *Sun* readers spent a heroic two hours or more reading the *Sun* every day, according to a 1975 study for the Press Commission. The same study found that people who read a daily paper were *more* likely to watch the news on TV than people who did not.

The newspaper readership tables produced for the advertising industry (tables 6.2 and 6.3, for example) used rather generous definitions of 'read', along the lines 'Did you see a copy of this paper yesterday?' On that basis, TV was unlikely to damage the press. If radio had depended on advertising revenue to operate on its 1940s scale, TV would have killed it. TV arguably did help kill the *News Chronicle* in that way, and perhaps the London evening press. But TV's main effect was to change the way in which people used their papers, more than to reduce their use.

It was clear by the late 1950s that TV, like radio before it, would provide the 'main facts' and the latest news, and that people wanted to follow up the details in a newspaper. TV scored better than the national dailies for nearly all the categories of news listed in a survey for the 1974 Press Commission (table 6.12). Its dominance over other media built up steadily through the 1980s with a minor wobble in the early 1990s (table 6.13). Newspaper interest shifted, too, towards entertainment, and, as has been demonstrated, TV itself became an important item in the press. The single most important reason quoted to the Press Commission for reading a provincial paper was in order to find out what was on TV that night. As the press had found with radio between the wars, moreover, people liked to compare a newspaper account of, say, a televised play or football match with their own impression.

Table 6.12 Ranking of news subjects in TV and national daily papers, 1975

'A useful source of news about':	*TV*		*National dailies*	
	(%)	*rank order*	*(%)*	*rank order*
the government	66	2	50	1=
political parties	45	3	33	4
other countries	72	1	50	1=
trade unions	35	5	26	5=
business and industry	34	6	35	3
football	29	8	26	5=
horse racing	8	10=	11	9
fashions	17	9	16	8
people in entertainment	41	4	25	7
the local region	30	7	9	10
the local council	8	10=	2	11

Source: Derived from Royal Commission on the Press 1974–7. Respondents aged 16+

Table 6.13 Sources of most news

	1980 (%)	*1982 (%)*	*1984 (%)*	*1986 (%)*	*1988 (%)*	*1990 (%)*	*1992 (%)*	*1994 (%)*
World news								
Television	52	58	62	65	65	69	71	72
Newspapers	33	27	23	25	25	18	17	15
Radio	14	12	13	10	9	11	10	10
Talking to people, etc.	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Local news								
Television	12	12	18	17	23	21	24	36
Newspapers	61	58	54	56	51	51	51	42
Radio	10	12	13	12	12	10	11	12
Talking to people, etc.	12	14	12	10	10	12	11	9

Source: IBA/ITC.

Did TV kill the cinema? It is natural to assume so. The weekly audience slumped from 25 million in 1955 to 2 million in 1976 (see table 6.14 for annual figures). The problem is to know how far to link the rise and fall of the two media not to each other but to some independent factor. Docherty and others, for instance, argue that mass cinema-going fitted an era of large working-class urban populations with increasing leisure and a little spare cash. Late 1950s 'affluence' – cars, holidays, pop

Table 6.14 Cinema admissions per annum

Date	*(m)*
1945	1,585
1950	1,396
1955	1,182
1960	501
1965	327
1970	193
1975	116
1980	96
1984	53
1985	72
1987	78
1989	94
1991	100
1993	114

Sources: Board of Trade/*Social Trends* to 1984. BFI from 1985.

records, coffee bars, more comfortable and family-centred homes – turned cinema into just one more leisure pursuit among a range of alternatives. TV, on this analysis, was a beneficiary of those social trends and cinema a victim (Docherty, Morrison and Tracey, 1987).

Audiences recovered after the mid-1980s but remained at a historically low level. Comedies continued to pull in the biggest audiences, followed by thrillers and adventure films. Profits were made by a small number of heavily promoted blockbusters. These, the 'must see' movies, accounted for much of the recovery. Another cause was the development of attractively located multiplex cinemas. Most people continued to go to the cinema just occasionally; but movies, after news, were the type of programme people said they were most interested in seeing on TV. It was cinema-going, not movies, that had changed. By 1970 the regular cinema audience had become disproportionately young, middle class and male.

In general, then, as TV percolated through social life, people accommodated their use of other media to it. This is not to say that TV was always dominant. The pattern of its use, like that of other media, was variable. TV-watching always dropped in summer, with differences of up to 20 per cent between winter and summer averages. People normally read fewer newspapers in summer too. Getting readers to renew the

subscription cancelled on holiday in August had long been a challenge to circulation managers. Radio listening, on the other hand, was less variable.

Media use also varied during the week, being heaviest at the weekened. Sections of the quality Sunday papers, especially the colour magazines, were still being read well into the following week. Usage also varied, in ways one would expect, during each day. Peak time for radio, once it had reached its post-TV level, was in the early morning, when people were getting up, having breakfast and driving to work. Women continued to listen in quite large numbers through the morning. The afternoon audience steadily declined, built up for an hour or so in the late afternoon and then surrendered to TV, except for another late-night blip. For TV, subject to the pattern of broadcast programme hours, the peak was at the other end of the day. Newspaper reading, again, was fitted in round the working day, mostly in the morning and evening, with a midday blip. Media use varied significantly too with events. The Olympic Games, World Cup football, wars, royal weddings, natural disasters and accidents, could all distort a month's figures.

All those patterns and differences can be qualified by taking account of age, gender and social class. These changed least in the most stable medium of the period (in terms of usage), the press. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 have already illustrated the class skew of different papers, and the smaller age and gender skew. By comparison, radio and TV audiences were homogenous for most of the period, not least because there was only a limited choice for 10 years after 1945.

The war had seen some very large audiences. The nine o'clock news regularly held the attention of 50 per cent of the population, and comedy and variety 40 per cent. Four people out of five heard the D-Day Normandy invasion in June 1944 announced on the radio news. Tommy Handley's comedy classic, *ITMA*, with its cast of characters and catch-phrases (entirely lost on later generations), convulsed half the nation every week.

Peace immediately sent the news ratings down by one-third, but the pulling power of radio in its heyday is shown in the fact that 45 per cent of the people listened to the half-hour general election speeches in the 1945 campaign – feats of concentration (however imperfect) inconceivable in 1995. Successor to *ITMA* was Wilfred Pickles' comedy quiz and chat show, *Have A Go!*. This was attracting an average weekly audience

Table 6.15 Radio listening: station shares, 1994

Station	*Weekly Audience Share (%)*
BBC:	
Radio 1	12
Radio 2	13
Radio 3	1
Radio 4	11
Radio 5 Live	2
BBC Local	10
Total BBC	49
Commercial:	
Virgin 1215	4
Classic FM	3
Atlantic 252	3
Local Commercial	38
Other	2
Total Commercial	50
	(100)

Figures are rounded so do not add up to 100%.
Source: RAJAR, 3rd Quarter, 1994.

of 54 per cent by 1948, a record for any regular light entertainment show on radio or TV ever since.

The gradual increase and specialization of radio channels disintegrated the audience. Table 6.15 shows the distribution in 1994, when commercial radio was about to overtake the BBC in audience share. As with the peak-hours curve, it tended to go in the opposite direction to TV. In contrast to viewing, radio listening generally decreased with age, was highest among the higher social grades and had no female bias. The figures for 1986 and 1991 (table 6.16) show clearly the distinct appeal of each channel – and the changes as ILR increasingly began to bite. Table 6.17 shows comparable figures for TV and table 6.18 gives channel profiles. Channel shares had varied somewhat over the years, quite apart from the changes caused by the introduction of BBC2 and Channel 4 (table 6.19). Regardless of fluctuations, BBC1 reflected closely the class composition of the population as a whole; ITV had a working-class skew right from the start; most channels (especially ITV) had a female skew; and all had an age profile considerably older than the population as a whole (in the 1970s, on the other hand 5–14 year olds had watched the most).

Table 6.16 Radio services: shares of listening, by age, sex and class, 1986 and 1991

	Percent of Listeness within each group, 1991 (1986 in brackets)									
	BBC Radio 1	*BBC Radio 2*	*BBC Radio 3*	*BBC Radio 4*	*BBC Radio 5*	*BBC local*	*All BBC*	*ILR*	*Other*	*All radio*
Age										
4–15	33(54)	1(4)	0(0)	2(2)	1	3(3)	40(63)	47(33)	13(4)	100
16–34	46(56)	1(5)	1(1)	3(5)	1	3(3)	55(70)	39(27)	6(3)	100
35–54	20(20)	11(24)	2(2)	14(14)	1	11(10)	59(70)	39(26)	2(4)	100
55+	3(4)	30(33)	3(2)	19(19)	1	22(19)	78(77)	22(18)	–(5)	100
Sex										
Males	27(33)	12(18)	2(2)	10(10)	2	11(8)	63(71)	34(25)	3(4)	100
Females	21(20)	15(19)	1(1)	13(13)	–	12(11)	63(73)	35(24)	2(3)	100
Social Class										
AB	18(20)	14(19)	5(5)	28(31)	1	9(6)	75(81)	23(16)	2(3)	100
C1	25(28)	15(20)	2(2)	14(15)	1	10(9)	66(74)	32(22)	2(4)	100
C2	31(36)	11(17)	1(1)	6(6)	1	10(10)	59(70)	37(26)	4(4)	100
DE	20(27)	14(19)	1(1)	6(7)	1	15(13)	57(67)	39(28)	4(5)	100
Total UK aged 4+	24(30)	13(19)	2(2)	12(12)	1	12(9)	63(72)	34(24)	3(4)	100
hours/minutesheardper head/week	2.32 (2:35)	1.22 (1:38)	0.11 (0:09)	1.10 (1.01)	0.06 (–)	1.09 (0:51)	6.33 (6:14)	3.35 (2:06)	0.19 (0.19)	10.27 (8:39)

Sources: BRD. Listeners to BBC regions are included in 'other' in 1986 and in 'BBC local' in 1991.
BBC Radio 5 did not broadcast in 1986.

Compared with the press and radio, however, the TV audience remained very mixed: most viewers watched most channels for some of the time. TV-watching had become a relatively passive activity by the 1980s. In the early days it was like cinema in the home, watched with rapt attention. Now it was more of a cross between cinema and radio, sometimes watched intently, but sometimes left on in the background. Remote control and more channels meant people 'zapped' from one to another, often watching 'television' rather than television programmes. As Barwise and Ehrenberg (1988) argue, people came to have little involvement in their TV. Audience sizes were fairly steady from day to day; people tended to avoid demanding programmes; they did not worry about missing episodes of a serial or series; they often showed rather moderate levels of attention and appreciation.

Table 6.17 BBC and ITV: shares of viewing, by age, sex and class, 1994

	Percent of each group viewing						
	BBC1	*BBC2*	*All BBC*	*ITV*	*C4*	*All ITV*	*Other*
Age							
4–15	31	8	38	38	12	51	11
16–34	31	9	40	39	12	51	10
35–54	33	11	44	39	10	49	8
55+	34	13	46	41	10	51	3
Sex							
Males	33	12	45	36	11	47	8
Females	32	9	42	42	11	53	6
Social Class							
AB	38	14	52	33	11	43	5
C1	34	11	55	37	11	48	8
C2	31	10	41	40	11	51	8
DE	30	10	39	44	11	55	6
Total UK age 4+	33	11	43	39	11	50	7
hours/minutes viewed per head/week	8.17	2.66	10.83	9.94	2.71	12.65	1.72

Notes: 'Other' is satellite and cable. Figures are rounded and may not sum to 100.
Sources: BARB/AGB

Table 6.18 BBC and ITV: channel profiles, by age, sex and class, 1994

	Percent of each channel's viewing provided by each group					
	BBC1	*BBC2*	*ITV*	*C4*	*Other*	*Population UK*
Age						
4–15	12	9	13	15	21	17
16–34	23	20	23	25	33	29
35–54	28	28	27	25	30	27
55+	37	43	37	35	16	27
Sex						
Males	45	50	41	45	54	48
Females	55	50	59	55	46	52
Social Class						
AB	17	19	12	15	11	17
C1	26	26	23	25	28	25
C2	24	23	26	24	31	27
DE	33	32	39	36	30	31

Source: BBC.

Table 6.19 BBC and ITV: audience shares

Channel	*1956 (%)*	*1960–1 (%)*	*1965–6 (%)*	*1971 (%)*	*1976 (%)*	*1980–1 (%)*	*1987–8 (%)*	*1994 (%)*
BBC1	38	46	45	45	49	39	37	30
BBC2	–	–	•	7	8	12	12	11
Total BBC	38	46	45	52	57	51	49	41
ITV	62	54	55	48	43	49	42	43
Channel 4	–	–	–	–	–	–	9	11
Total ITV	62	54	55	48	43	49	51	54
Other	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5

1956: evening viewing only; 1980–1 figures are from IBA handbook; others are BBC/BARB.

• The small audience with BBC2 available watched it for about 20 per cent of their viewing time.

'Other' includes mainly satellite, cable and timeshift.

Table 6.20 Satellite/cable viewing: channel shares

Channel	*% viewing share*	
	1992	*1994*
BBC1	25.1	24.2
BBC2	7.1	6.4
ITV	30.2	30.3
Channel 4	6.4	7.0
Total Terrestrial	68.8	67.9
Sky One	7.5	5.6
Sky News	1.8	1.2
Sky Sports	3.4	3.7
Movie Channel	3.6	3.4
Sky Movies Plus	6.2	3.9
Sky Movies Gold	0.4	0.6
Total BSkyB	23.0	18.4
Other Channels	8.2	12.8
Total Non-Terrestrial	31.2	32.1
	(100.0)	(100.0)

Note: Figures refer to first half of each year, in households with satellite/cable.

Source: BARB.

These comments need little qualification to take account of the penetration of satellite and cable by the mid-1990s. This was not yet great enough to have made much impact. In 1995 some 20 per cent of

households were subscribers to one or the other – but these viewers still spent most of their time watching BBC and ITV. The ITC reported that in 1994 cable subscribers spent only about 35 per cent of their time watching cable and satellite channels. This was actually a decrease from 42 per cent the previous year. For dish subscribers, the 1994 figures in table 6.20 show an even lower usage, with the Sky channels attracting less than 20 per cent of viewing time.

The majority of viewers therefore remained happy with a mixed diet, rather as though, in a public library, they sometimes picked up *The Times*, sometimes the *Daily Mail*, sometimes the *Sun*. People typically watched a bit of many things instead of sticking rigidly to films or sport or news. This did not, of course, mean that all programmes were watched equally. Audiences varied from the minuscule for further education, to 20–25 million for 'major events' like the Cup Final and Christmas Day programmes. Because of the decisive influence of the time a programme was scheduled, audience size was not a reliable indicator of actual popularity, and both networks researched audience preferences, eventually evolving a joint Audience Appreciation Index. In general, women, older people and the lower socio-economic groups were the most enthusiastic about what they watched.

The popularity of programme types did not change much, although there was always great variation within them and overlap between them. In their 1958 diet (which did not yet include so many top feature films or so much news), men gave their highest preferences to sport, plays, news, travel, variety, documentaries, westerns and current affairs, and their lowest to serious music, religion and science. Women put plays, news and quizzes top, with sport roughly where men put religion, and science and serious music bottom (BBC, quoted in Tunstall, 1983, p. 112). Young people were more interested in films, crime and quizzes than their elders.

The different programme categories of the 1980s and 1990s prevent exact comparison. In 1986 drama, series and serials, sport and documentaries all scored high on the Appreciation Index. Feature films, quiz shows, panel games, variety and the news were less popular. In sheer audience numbers, however, the programme rankings were less varied. Light entertainment, sport, feature films, soap operas and crime series got the highest regular audiences, followed by sport, drama and general interest series, chat shows, the news, documentaries, one-off plays and current affairs.

Newspaper readers' preferences are an equally complex business but cannot be dealt with here at length. One may argue indefinitely how far contents followed taste and how far they created it, but there is no doubt that the broad 'entertainment' appeal of the press increased at the expense of hard news and information. News itself became more entertaining, and technologies enabling better graphics and presentation – especially the vastly improved colour of the 1990s – made features more attractive.

The sheer quantity of matter meant that people did not read all their newspaper. Like the effect of programme scheduling on TV audience sizes, a story put on the front page was much more likely to be read than something buried inside, and 'page traffic' figures show slightly higher noting of items on right-hand than left-hand pages.

Readers' interests coincided generally with the news values listed at the start of the chapter. Home news was preferred over foreign, news about things familiar to the reader over the unfamiliar. Particular items like cartoons and horoscopes often had high readerships; leading articles did not. News about the government attracted attention; politics and parties were less popular. Sport attracted more men than women; fashions and women's features, obviously, more women than men.

Readers of quality papers wanted more 'serious' matter. Research for the 1974 Press Commission confirmed both that they enjoyed their paper less than readers of the populars and that they would miss it worse if deprived of it. This was interesting general confirmation that the element of 'serious' content that had been an important part of the deceased *Daily Herald* and *News Chronicle* was no longer something the non-quality reader was prepared to pay for in a daily paper. For the non-Conservative parties, too, it was melancholy news – blazoned every day in the tabloid approach of the *Sun*. The findings also supported this author's conclusion in a review of data in the early 1960s, that the further along the socio-economic scale one went, the more were entertainment and relaxation the motives for newspaper-reading (Seymour-Ure, 1968).

The entertainment role of the press was confirmed too by the Press Commission finding that most people felt their paper gave them as much news as they wanted. Among tabloid readers there was also a strong awareness of their paper's sensationalism, tendency to invade private grief and to print too many silly or trivial stories. The corresponding regular complaints against TV were about bad language, violence and sex

(in that order). ITV programmes were most likely to cause offence and satellite programmes the least.

'Entertainment', of course, is an extremely general term. Over the years, many studies analysed people's motivations for media use in great detail, and many of the specific findings would count as 'entertainment'. Quiz programmes, for instance, appealed to people as a means of excitement and escape from worries, an opportunity to rate oneself in comparison with other people and possibly to learn something. Soap operas, naturally, provided endless scope for companionship, both with the fictional characters and as a conversation topic with friends and at work. Such studies resound with heartfelt quotations: 'I like to hear the sound of voices in the house'; 'The programme reminds me that I could be worse off than I am'; 'It sometimes helps me to understand my own life' (McQuail, 1972).

Such motivations cut across different media and remind us again of the extent to which media permeate our lives. As with patterns of ownership, the impression of contents and media usage over the years is of an increasingly interlocking system, the user's version of conglomeration. Although it does not show up in the analyses, content surely also became more international, both in source of origin (Australian Soaps) and in substance (American football).

Within the system, finally, there were varying combinations of medium, content and audience interest. The world of rock and pop music – non-existent, virtually, in 1945 – linked radio, records, tapes, video and magazines, with a relatively small and specialized TV element. Sport was integral to the national and local press, TV and to a diminishing extent (except for cricket) to radio. Politics was the preserve of press, radio, TV and a few specialized periodicals. Fashion, 'life styles' and women's interests (an increasingly anomalous category) thrived in magazines and the press. Drama was strong in film, TV and radio; news, in TV, radio and press. Sex was featured most freely on film and, within the medium's limits, in magazines, with TV and newspapers inhibited (in comparison, and decreasingly) by mass taste and public policy. These links all had several levels: financial, organizational, promotional, international, advertising, audience. The different patterns overlapped, linking, in a wide sense, to form the intricate media system as a whole.

7 Media, Government and Politics: The Intrusion of Television

Media observe and report the work of government and politics. Their decisions about how to do so inevitably make them offer an interpretation too – a judgement of the meaning and significance of what they see. Such judgements often go further and include criticism or approval.

That much could be said of most subjects in the media – football, for example. But media relations with government and politicians are distinctive for two reasons. First, the press and broadcasting provide important arenas or forums within which political argument is carried on. Second, the government can take powers over the media. Neither fact makes the relationship unique. For a dramatist, for instance, the TV studio *is* the stage – a new theatrical forum, requiring different skills from conventional theatre. Similarly other institutions, such as the courts and organizations controlling large capital, can exercise various kinds of power over media. But the government, as the instrument of the state, is in the strongest position of all to exercize power, either by making laws or by exerting the kind of informal pressures the Governors of the BBC have frequently endured.

Extra edge is given to the government's power to control media by the fact that, if it is used, the government interferes with an instrument of its own accountability. In constitutional theory, the accountability of the government lies through Parliament to the electorate. In practice, however, the rise of mass suffrage made the government dependent upon the media. Governments have naturally been jealous that media control-

led the means by which most people got most of their information about government, and that media, in the 1945–95 period, provided almost no opportunities for governments to present themselves on their own terms. Media, equally, have traditionally suspected governments of itching to censor them. Whenever a government does so, media organizations believed in 1995 as strongly as in 1945, the major social force preventing unaccountable despotism is weakened, if not destroyed.

This historic tension between government and the press has never been much relaxed, and the decades after 1945 are no exception. The twangs could be unpredictable, like the snap of argument in a family row. In 1947, for instance, the MP Garry Allighan ruined his career by writing an article in a small newspaper trade journal, the *World's Press News*, alleging that MPs were 'lubricated into loquacity' by free drinks from journalists, in return for political titbits. Upon inquiry, the only journalist who could be found to admit to the practice was Allighan himself (journalism was his profession). The Commons expelled him and censured the magazine's editors. (Allighan made a new life in South Africa.) The Suez crisis of 1956 saw a similar episode. When petrol rationing was announced, the *Sunday Express* appeared to allege that MPs were giving themselves unfair shares. The editor, John Junor, was summoned in pomp to the bar of the Commons and made to apologize.

While specific cases were unpredictable, there was perhaps a general rule about government/media tension. Political crises, as Jeremy Tunstall put it, commonly had a 'media sub-plot' (Tunstall, 1970). The Allighan case was a sub-plot of a more general crisis in relations between politics and the press in the post-war years, reflected in the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Press in 1947. The *Sunday Express* case was part of a sub-plot of government/media rows throughout the Suez crisis.

Those two incidents of tension were in the parliamentary forum. For most politicians, Parliament and political parties were the context in which their relations with media were carried on. For journalists, too, these were convenient benchmarks by which to judge the importance of personalities and events. The number of candidates fielded by a minor party at a general election, for instance, was the normal test of whether to give that party free broadcasting time. A frequent source of tension between media and politicians (in or out of government) was their differing views of whether Parliament and parties were getting the right amount and kind of media coverage.

The relative importance of particular parties, and of Parliament itself, changed between 1945 and 1995. Many people claimed the influence of Parliament was in decline. But parties, Parliament and Cabinet remained the dominant political institutions. On the media side, by contrast, TV progressively grew to match, and in some ways to supplant, the press as the chief political medium. This chapter, therefore, explores the intrusion of TV as a force in politics. The following chapter deals with the changing relations of media, parties, and prime ministers.

The intrusion of television: five stages

Parties made much of the running in the development of political broadcasting until the coming of ITV. Broadcasters often determined the style – how to interview a minister, what to ask about and so on. But many of the advances in getting *access* to the medium were driven, not surprisingly, by the spur of competition. This was sharpest in general elections, and when advances came between elections, they often did so with the next election in mind. The watershed year in the period 1945–95 can thus appropriately be regarded as the election year of 1959.

We are rapidly losing the capacity to imagine what general elections were like before TV. Until 1959, there was no radio and TV coverage of the campaign at all, beyond bulletins about the dissolution of Parliament and the weather on polling day. This led to absurd situations where overseas listeners to the BBC World Service could hear reports of a major international speech by Winston Churchill in 1951 but British voters could not. (They could read about it, of course.) This 'Trappist' policy had one exception: the series of party election broadcasts produced quite independently by each party, with technical production assistance if required. These broadcasts had been numerous in 1945 – 26, totalling over 10 hours. In 1950 there were half as many, totalling half the length. Each party made one fifteen-minute TV broadcast in 1951 as well, but still in 1955 the radio broadcasts outnumbered the televised. Similar party broadcasts happened between elections, at the rate of three or four a year for the major parties, on each of radio and TV. But there were very few political interviews and discussions, and party managers kept tight control on who broadcast. Government party members needed clearance from Number Ten.

In 1959, on the initiative of ITV, the broadcasters held their breath and jumped into the electoral pond, to describe the froth and eddies of the campaign. This was arguably the single most important moment in the history of political broadcasting. Hitherto broadcasters took politicians almost entirely at the politicians' own value. Their main exercise of judgement was how much time to make available for the parties' own broadcasts. From now on, broadcasters were to make qualitative judgements about the news value of election campaigns; the relative importance of issues, personalities, minor parties; and how they should all be treated. Broadcasters increasingly took politicians at the *broadcasters'* value. Parties had to earn their coverage; to sell themselves, first to the broadcasters and through them to the electorate. The best portent of the future in 1959 was the invention of the daily campaign party press conference, introduced by Labour to catch the broadcasters' attention, and instantly copied by the Conservatives. The same shift of emphasis took place in the coverage of politics between elections.

This intrusion of TV may be divided loosely into five periods – two before 1959 and three afterwards.

Inauguration: TV at the heels of radio

Before 1959 TV news and 'current affairs' (the description, and the BBC department, which covered most political broadcasting) was in its infancy. The BBC still had a monopoly, and the best date with which to mark the end of the period is the end of the TV monopoly in 1955. ITV brought a breath of fresh air both by the stimulus of competition and by its own willingness to innovate.

TV in the early years was radio with pictures, and it followed exactly the same rules established over the previous quarter century for the treatment of 'controversial' subjects on radio. Applied to politics and government, the principles of 'public service broadcasting', agreed between successive broadcasters and party managers, could be reduced to a few simple ideas. First, there should be no editorializing by the BBC. Second, political coverage should be balanced. Third, the BBC should retain the right to decide who could broadcast, subject to the statutory power of the responsible minister to require the broadcasting of a particular communication. The operation of these principles caused

continual difficulty, especially because they came under most strain in times of political tension. They were also capable of infinite refinement and the refinements themselves could be informally glossed.

The principle of 'balance' was not as contentious in the post-war years as later on, partly, no doubt, as a hangover from the wartime coalition mood and partly because the Conservative and Labour parties so dominated the political scene. 'Balance' meant treatment appropriate to a party's strength, which was measured by its parliamentary representation. The annual allocation of party political broadcasts was settled on this basis by a committee of party leaders and BBC executives. Parties got their proportionate share of coverage in the daily parliamentary report and the news bulletins. Careful count was kept of how many parliamentarians gave 'talks' (a disappearing genre by the 1980s) or had appeared in the comparatively few discussion programmes such as *Any Questions*, which began in 1948. Occasionally, MPs would ask in the Commons for details of these tallies.

If balance caused problems, they were either for groups that were simply beyond the pale – excluded from consideration by their failure to seek or achieve parliamentary success – or for the party managers. Good broadcasters, like good cartoonists, often turned out to be individualists or dissidents. The *Tribune* wing of the Labour party, under Aneurin Bevan's leadership and including gifted broadcasters such as *Tribune's* editor, Michael Foot, was a constant irritant to the Attlee leadership. Foot was part of a popular weekly TV programme, *In The News*, made up of disputatious conversationalists. But balance *within* parties was not the BBC's concern, except indirectly. It involved them in frequent negotiation about individual broadcasters, but it was clear that the parties themselves were in charge.

More delicate for the broadcasters, and fraught with the possibility of rows that might do long term damage to the BBC, was the issue of broadcasts by government ministers. Clearly, if ministers could command the microphone at will, BBC 'independence' would amount to nothing. Ministers must therefore appear only 'by invitation'. In what circumstances, if they sought an invitation, might it be refused? If granted, must the invitation be extended also to the Opposition, so as to maintain the principle of balance? If so, should minor parties be included (which, in this period, meant a tiny Liberal rump)? Here was a minefield indeed, and obviously it was in everybody's interest to define precise

rules. These were set out in 1947 in a short *aide-mémoire* between the government, the Opposition and the BBC – one of the key texts in the history of relations between broadcasting and the State (Goldie, 1977, pp. 341–4).

The note distinguished four types of political broadcasts. First were *uncontroversial ministerial broadcasts*. These could be made at the request of the government, to explain policy or legislation in a 'purely factual way', or to appeal to the nation on matters requiring public help (such as fuel economy). These broadcasts were to be as impartial as possible. The second type were *controversial ministerial broadcasts*. These were likely to be more tricky, because it was the Opposition that would claim they were controversial – regardless of the government's view – and would want a chance to reply. This opportunity should be sought from the government through the normal party channels, but the BBC reserved the right to make its own decision either way, if the parties did not agree within a few days. The third type were *party political broadcasts*, allocated annually by agreement between the parties and the BBC on the basis of parliamentary arithmetic, and put together by the parties themselves. The fourth were *controversial discussions* in which two or more parliamentarians on different sides took part.

Those arrangements were clear in themselves. But they promised little joy for the BBC, which was bound, sooner or later, to be caught in a row between government and Opposition about rights of reply, or in a row with the government about a ministerial broadcast being made at all. The 1956 Suez crisis provided both.

The *aide-mémoire* also reserved the BBC's right to let parliamentarians of 'outstanding national eminence' broadcast, if they might otherwise be shut out by having become 'detached' from their party. This was a sop to the argument that Churchill should not have been kept off the air in his pre-war wilderness years. As Asa Briggs points out, however, the BBC continued to play safe by not inviting Aneurin Bevan to the microphone, for instance, after his estrangement from the Attlee leadership in 1951 (Briggs, 1979, p. 615).

The agreement reflected, of course, an era in which political broadcasting of any kind was extremely rare and such notions as a 'right of reply' were prizes to be fought for. Finally, the note included the rule which most perfectly conveys the status of political broadcasting until the mid-1950s: the 'Fourteen-Days' rule. This was included at the

request of the BBC, which had invented it in 1944 so as to avoid pressure from ministers who wanted to broadcast about current legislation which, as the wartime coalition began to strain, might be controversial. The rule now consisted simply in an agreement not to broadcast discussions or statements on any issues during the fortnight before they were debated in either House. As a result, programmes were frequently being re-planned or withdrawn. On the BBC's estimate, 'some hundreds' of items in various stages of preparation were potentially vulnerable, and producers tended to sideline 'risky' subjects.

The ministerial broadcast provisions of the *aide-mémoire* had in fact removed the need for the rule at all. In 1951 the Beveridge Committee disapproved of it, and by 1953 the BBC was pressing hard to drop it. But by now the party leaders themselves had got used to it. After much argument, the BBC insisted that responsibility be clearly taken by the government, so it was issued as a formal ministerial directive (covering ITV too) in 1955. It survived until after the Suez crisis the following year.

The story of the 'Fourteen-Days' rule showed the broadcasters as subservient, in a strict sense: deferring to a crudely literal notion of the sovereignty of Parliament. But it had a kind of beauty, for it reflected in an extreme form the fact that in those post-war years, when radio still treated politics on a small scale, the BBC adapted its own needs very largely to the people, the institutions, the manners, the values and the style of discourse that it sought to report. In style, this was symbolized in the hushed tones for which the commentator Richard Dimbleby became famous on such occasions as the Coronation and the State Opening of Parliament (such tones were due to the need to speak quietly but sounded like deference). Physically, it meant a policy of inconspicuousness, epitomized in the practice of hiding the microphone in a vase of flowers when the Queen broadcast her Christmas message (first televised in 1957).

Inconspicuousness was more of a problem for TV than for radio: bright lights and big cameras were two of the reasons regularly quoted by MPs from the 1960s onwards in opposing televised debates. But this early period of inauguration saw TV gradually following radio's lead. In 1950 TV first covered the general election results. In 1951 came the first televised party election broadcasts (the BBC offered time in 1950 but the parties turned it down). In 1952 R A Butler was the first Chancellor of

the Exchequer to appear on TV. In 1953 the Conservative party produced the first TV party political broadcast. From 1952 onwards, ministers began to take part occasionally in the interview programme *Press Conference*, and in 1953 the first *Panorama* appeared. In 1954 the first Budget broadcasts by the Chancellor and Opposition spokesmen took place, and in October the Conservative party's annual conference was televised.

Adjustment, exploration, initiative

On the broadcasting side, the start of ITV marks a new period. Among the politicians, the corresponding change is the succession of Churchill by Eden in 1955. Differences between prime ministers are discussed in chapter 8: the essential point is that Churchill, 80 in 1954, belonged to a political era of print and live oratory, while Eden, Prime Minister at 57, was still adaptable and had already shown in election broadcasts that he could use TV effectively. Between 1955 and 1959, then, with the number of TV licences surging ahead, the broadcasters began to be aware of their muscle and of more welcoming surroundings. The balance started to tip: politics began to adapt to broadcasting, as politicians became keener to use it, by opening their arenas (the Conservatives' annual conference was a forerunner) or by using the arena of the TV studio.

Eden was content to see the 'Fourteen-Days' rule lapse. The Commons voted by 271–126 in November 1955 to retain it; but it could not withstand the national clamour of the Suez crisis, and it was suspended, supposedly for a 'trial period', in December 1956. Eden gave the first 'ministerial broadcast' in April 1956, when the Russian leaders Bulganin and Khrushchev paid a State visit. He was furious to discover during the Suez crisis that he could not address the nation by radio and TV at his own discretion, and that the Opposition leader Hugh Gaitskell might have a right of reply if the BBC agreed to invite him. He gave two such broadcasts, one on 26 August and the other on 3 November, when British and French troops were preparing to occupy the canal. Gaitskell broadcast on 4 November.

To Grace Wyndham Goldie, a leading BBC executive in the development of political broadcasting, Eden's use of TV in the crisis was the

beginning of TV's primacy over sound. This was reinforced by the introduction of current affairs 'magazine' programmes such as the immensely popular early evening weekday programme *Tonight*. This trained new generations of producers to think specifically in TV terms. Interviewing, to give an instance of the difference, became, as Mrs Goldie put it, more journalistic and less reverential. This was even more true at ITN, which looked for its style to the United States rather than the BBC. ITN hired crisp young men like Robin Day and Chris Chataway, who stayed on the right side of brashness but were discouraged from calling ministers 'sir' or ducking hard questions. 'By 1956–57,' Mrs Goldie noted, 'the questioning of political leaders on TV by impartial interviewers had become established custom' (Goldie, 1977, p. 208).

In 1958, TV covered three significant political events, each quite distinct and each representing a kind of 'intrusion' by the medium. Together they heralded the watershed year of 1959. One, the latest and the most ceremonial, but important symbolically, was live coverage of the State Opening of Parliament. More important than the constitutional symbolism of the Crown and Parliament, with the Queen reading a speech prepared by her ministers, was the symbolism of the event as expressing the politicians' willingness to take a risk. The risk, hardly a great one but much vaunted, was that TV, by relaying a ceremony hitherto rather private and well understood by everyone involved, might make the viewing multitude wrongly believe that the partisan legislative proposals in the speech necessarily had the Queen's personal support. This programme, in its way, was a milestone.

Entirely different was the first CND Aldermaston march at Easter, 1958. Though it was not planned on these lines, the march can be seen as the start of 'visual politics' in the post-war era. In 1958, marchers walked *to* Aldermaston. Thereafter, because it made so much better a climax, not least in publicity, they marched *from* Aldermaston, ending with a rally in Trafalgar Square. The march was massively televised. Until the decline of CND it remained a superb instrument of pressure group publicity – visually varied; sustained over several days in a dead news period (a bank holiday weekend); embracing both ordinary people and several kinds of social and political elite; combining the predictable and the unexpected and culminating in spectacle and oratory in the greatest public space of the capital.

The iconography of marches and demonstrations, and their adaptation to secure the best TV coverage, became matters of professionalism – for example in the USA during the Vietnam years and the civil rights movement. When CND revived in the early 1980s, the simplicity of marches was replaced by more complex visual symbols. These were well suited to TV coverage, like the encirclement of a nuclear base by protesters holding hands. In 1958, surely, that would have seemed a rather strange idea.

In 1958, thirdly, came the pioneering coverage of a by-election by the Granada ITV company and ITN, with the BBC Northern Region in tow. Broadcasters had previously feared flouting the Representation of the People Act if they covered elections. The Act forbad anyone but a candidate's agent to spend money getting him or her elected. The press were exempt, but not broadcasters. News programmes cost money, so a programme which reported one candidate in a constituency but not all, or not on an equal basis, might break the law. ITV was also cramped by the Television Act of 1954, which appeared to limit party coverage to balanced discussions and debates and not to allow, say, a report from the hustings. ITV decided to test these restrictions. It covered the progress of the by-election campaign at Rochdale in March 1958. The heavens did not fall. Having successfully set this precedent, the broadcasters went on to cover subsequent elections in Kelvingrove, Torrington and Northern Ireland, and then the general election of October 1959.

Political broadcasting comes of age: 1960–1974

The fall of Edward Heath's government in February 1974 may be taken as the nominal end of the third period of TV's intrusion into politics (and radio's too, on a minor scale). This is not because TV played a conspicuous and decisive part in the election campaign and the miners' strike that led Heath to call it, but because Heath was visibly uncomfortable with TV, especially compared with his predecessor Harold Wilson. It is tempting to see his years in office as the time when politicians were no longer able to avoid coming to terms with TV. The question could now be seriously asked: which is 'bigger' – TV or politics? The broadcasters extended the range of their political coverage, though the cameras did not quite get into Parliament itself. Politicians adapted their beha-

viour more closely to the conventions of the screen. Formal rules, such as the *aide-mémoire* and the Representation of the People Act, were liberalized. TV's own political arenas – current affairs and discussion programmes such as *Panorama* and individual documentaries – began to be valued as such in their own right. Backbenchers in particular saw the advantages of a brief TV or radio appearance over a Commons speech that got no coverage.

Examples of all these changes dot the years. The Conservative party annual conference, for instance, used to meet for its first few days in the absence of the leader. On a Saturday morning, as a finale, he would arrive to make a rousing speech. Heath, elected Leader in 1965, with the party's fortunes to restore and his own authority to build, began the practice of attending throughout the conference, so that no opportunity of TV coverage would be lost.

Heath had been chosen as leader by a formal system of voting. Previous Conservative leaders had always 'emerged' – a euphemism for selection by a senior clique on the basis of 'soundings' within the party. In 1963 these soundings had to be taken during the annual conference, as luck would have it, since Harold Macmillan decided impetuously to retire as a result of sudden illness. In measured privacy, 'soundings' might be a dignified and justifiable method of selecting the right successor. In the glare of TV, they looked disorganized and unedifying, even if Lord Home, who 'emerged' (jettisoning his peerage), proved a popular choice. The procedure was quickly reformed, and TV had played a part in making that happen.

Election campaigns changed in this period, each one seeing further adjustment to new opportunities of TV. The timing and venue of speeches changed to fit the convenience of TV news and relay systems. So did their style. Heath commented in 1966 that TV coverage made his jokes stale more quickly. Wilson found in 1964 that to make repartee with hecklers effective on TV, he must repeat a comment before demolishing it. Leaders went on 'walkabouts' for the cameras, more than on extended hustings tours. Coverage focussed increasingly on the party Leaders, not least because of limited camera resources. In 1966 and 1970 more than half of *all* the radio and TV news coverage went on Heath and Wilson. The daily party press conferences became an important fixture. Candidates now came into the TV studios as well, for a growing variety of interview and discussion programmes.

The monarch too unbent to TV. The listening public heard Prince Charles' voice when he gave an interview to the early morning Radio 4 *Today* programme in April 1969. A few months later, 23 million viewers watched a uniquely 'natural' BBC documentary film of the whole royal family at work and play. This was a landmark in royal public relations. It took some of the mystery out of majesty. In the daily round of queenly duties, its equivalent was the development of the walkabout – spontaneous contact taking the royals off the red carpet (but still on the opposite side of the cordon) as they talked to people in the crowd that came to see them on public occasions. Walkabouts, of course, made good human-interest television.

These years also saw expansion of political programming. In this the satire shows of the 1960s should be included, for politicians were a ready butt of the irreverent brand of young mimics and humourists. *That Was The Week That Was*, anchored by the youthful David Frost, provided a Saturday night cabaret based largely on people and events in the news of the previous week. This was ground more homely to malodorous bog plants and stinging nettles than to clean, undeviating rows of 'balanced' runner beans. It came under the watchful eye of the 'Talks and Current Affairs' department, the BBC's experts in managing 'balance'. It had the backing of a Director-General, Hugh Greene, new in office, who knew as a young man the fizz of cabaret in the Berlin of the early 1930s. An emphatic sign of its political nature was that the show was taken off the air in the run-up to the 1964 general election. But it had successors with similar snappy names, like *Not Only But Also*. The actor John Bird became famous for his imitations of Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

The satire programmes were not easy for politicians to attack, for a complainant ran the risk of making himself ridiculous by looking pompous and thereby underlining the satirist's point. The programmes therefore tended to build up resentment. This might then explode. Most famous was Harold Wilson's explosion over the BBC documentary *Yesterday's Men* (1971). This had been intended as an innocent enquiry into the feelings and doings of ministers unexpectedly thrown out of office by the electorate. Wilson thought it tendentious, malicious, biased and quite contrary to the virtues of 'balance'. This very vulnerability, however, illustrates the underlying strength of the broadcasters by the mid-1960s: they might lose battles, but the TV medium was now too entrenched to lose the war.

Part of such entrenchment was the provision of new services. BBC 2 had started in 1964, with a remit to include 'serious' programmes of a kind with which politics tended to be lumped. In 1973 the first commercial radio stations went on air. One by-product of these in the two general elections of 1974 was the first election radio phone-in programmes, for phone-ins were a characteristic commercial radio device.

The idea of ordinary citizens giving voice over the air in an election campaign would have been entirely implausible in the 1950s. But the rules of access were substantially eased by changes in the Representation of the People Act in 1969. These were chiefly prompted by a law case following the 1964 general election, when the defeated Communist in the constituency of the Conservative leader, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, sought (without success) to unseat him, on account of his broadcast coverage. The new Act gave broadcasters the same immunity as the press already enjoyed, and it allowed candidates to broadcast freely on matters that did not concern their own constituency. This confirmed the legality of the front bench 'confrontations' and discussion programmes, which had been a feature of the 1966 campaign.

The 1947 *aide-mémoire* was also changed in 1969, to reflect the new realities of TV and political broadcasting. The category of 'explanatory', uncontroversial ministerial broadcasts was, in effect, abolished by the BBC undertaking to fit them into its regular programmes when required. The controversial or infrequent 'appeal to the nation' broadcasts, on the other hand, were now to be available to the prime minister (or a colleague designated by him) as a right, without the fiction of a BBC invitation. The Opposition were given an automatic right of reply. Third parties, if big enough, were entitled to join in a subsequent broadcast discussion with senior Cabinet and Opposition representatives. All these changes took the heat off the broadcasters.

The last point about political broadcasting in this period is that it produced in Harold Wilson the first TV prime minister. Eden and Macmillan had been sensitive to TV's potential, and Macmillan developed a fine TV manner. But Wilson was the first to build the medium into the prime minister's armoury. This was true in details of performance: talking quite frequently and informally in interview programmes, strengthening the Yorkshire accent, using pipe not cigar on screen. But his approach went also right across the board, to manipulative devices

like punishing broadcasters by the selective denial of interview requests or appointing Lord Hill to be Chairman of the BBC Governors from the corresponding position at their arch-rivals, the ITA. These techniques continued, of course, in Wilson's second term of office, 1974–6, which falls in the next period of TV's intrusion. In 1964 the priority he gave to TV was a significant innovation. Heath suffered by comparison most noticeably as a performer. But henceforth all prime ministers must be 'TV prime ministers'.

TV ascendant: 1975–1989

The fourth stage in the intrusion of TV involves changes of degree rather than of kind. Among open political institutions (which excludes the Cabinet and civil service), only the courts still denied entry in 1989 to the cameras, and even the possibility of televised trials was not considered to be in all circumstances inconceivable. In 1989 the Commons, with much dragging of feet, decided the principles that should govern the televising of their proceedings. Regular radio broadcasting had started in 1976 after a short experimental period the previous year. The Lords had let in the cameras in 1985 and seemed to enjoy stealing a march on the Commons. The general elections of the period, in 1979, 1983 and 1987, saw TV ever more dominant over campaign substance and style. To say that 'TV *is* the campaign' was no longer novel, let alone shocking, but a truism.

TV performance was a major factor in decisions about the choice of parliamentary candidates and party leaders. Where Alec Douglas-Home was the first leader to be ditched by his party partly because the decision-makers in 1965 believed (perhaps wrongly) that he was an electoral liability on TV, Neil Kinnock was the first of whom telegenic qualities were said to be a main factor in his selection as Labour leader in 1983. By 1989 politicians shaped their appearance, their style and their rhetoric to the needs of TV.

The range of channels, hours of programming and types of programme proliferated. Channel 4 (1982) and Breakfast Time TV (1983) provided new outlets. Access to the airwaves became easier, for citizens as well as politicians. It was widely remarked that Mrs Thatcher was more troubled by a Bristol housewife on a talkback programme in the 1983 election than by any professional interviewer. Radio 4's *Today*

programme was an almost daily forum for ministers and politicians in general. In the late 1980s a minister took part for the first time in Radio 4's *Any Questions*. After his sensational and unexpected resignation and walkout from a Cabinet meeting about the future of the Westland helicopter company in 1986, Michael Heseltine made 17 broadcast appearances within 24 hours. The depiction of politicians in satirical programmes went a step beyond mimicry with the animated puppets of *Spitting Image*, a translation of caricature to the screen that would have delighted the great newspaper caricaturists of the 1930s and 1940s such as David Low. The royal family were guyed with a lack of restraint unimaginable even in the 1960s.

Living politicians were portrayed by actors also in a genre new to TV – the reconstruction as drama of recent historical events such as the Suez crisis. What was truth and what was fiction? In the 1940s, BBC executives would have agonized interminably, but such plays would, in fact, never have been contemplated. Now, politicians welcomed them, if it suited their purpose. A row about a Falklands War play, for example, centred on complaints that the BBC had cancelled it for being too sympathetic to the government's policy.

The old stopwatch approach to balance and non-partisanship seemed increasingly unrealistic. A glance at the future suggested that balance would be more and more difficult to maintain, if satellites were beaming programmes that did not even originate within British government jurisdiction. The Thatcher government's philosophy of 'market forces' in broadcasting, steered only with a 'light touch', sat uneasily with the old ideas about balance, although these could obviously still be maintained within particular programmes and series. The Conservative party, indeed, established a 'monitoring unit' to check for what it considered bias in TV and radio programmes.

What all this amounted to was that TV had reached political maturity. The generations of politician and of viewers who had to 'learn' TV – how to behave on it, how to watch it – were a vanishing minority. TV behaviour would continue to change, of course. But it was a medium with which nearly everyone in society had grown up and was no longer self-conscious. Even if some of them were no good at it, every politician knew how to use TV by 1990, just as any of them knew how to make a speech or write a piece for the local paper. TV, in sum, was no longer an instrument to be applied *to* politics: it was part of the environment

within which politics was carried on. Whether it was 'bigger' than politics is a complicated and perhaps fruitless question. Certainly TV was shaped by politicians and governments, among other forces. But equally, politicians and governments could not escape the influence of TV any more than of their native language. TV had become, in a general sense, a forum of political accountability.

Electronic glut? Political television disintegrates, 1990– ?

It may be premature in 1995 to stretch some of the trends identified in the previous section to a point that would justify a claim of imminent disintegration. Yet there are good grounds at least for playing with the idea – if only for the purpose of spotting future evidence.

First, the 1990 Broadcasting Act symbolized in its limited range the end of a broadcasting era, not the beginning of one. If the idea of 'television' itself was disintegrating, then the familiar forms of political television would probably disintegrate too. The mid-1990s were already a multi-channel world. Some channels were internationally originated. How, for instance, could the news values used by CNN, controlled from the USA, be expected to fit precisely the British criteria of 'public service' international news? Some channels, too, served 'niches'. If these had political significance at all, they might best be regarded as pressure groups, indirectly promoting the cause of publicly subsidized institutions such as grand opera, for example, or having a vested interest in steamy versions of free speech rhetoric, in order to justify televised erotica.

Increasingly, furthermore, there would be interactive channels. Radio talkback shows had long since shown the potential for 'controversy' on air, which once would have fallen foul of broadcast rules. The potential of cable and, from the vantage point of 1995 more breathtakingly, of digital TV and the Internet, would take 'interaction' far beyond such simplicities. As American political campaigns were already beginning to show, in the jockeying of competitors for the Republican nomination in the 1996 presidential election, individual parties and candidates could expect to have their own electronic links with the mass electorate: no need for voters to rely on coverage by the TV networks – just download candidates' speeches from the Internet. It was not yet possible in 1995 to download information from 10 Downing Street; but you could

download from the White House via the Internet every word spoken publicly by President Clinton in press conferences, photo-opportunities, convention speeches, broadcast interviews.

Electronic glut does not, of course, mean that politicians and commentators have anything extra worth saying. But it does make the universal application of rules about party balance and fairness, as in the past, progressively more difficult. Whether it also makes them *unnecessary* is an entirely different problem. So long as most people continued to watch the four British terrestrial TV channels for most of their news, including about politics, both problems remained hypothetical. But in the 1990s they were at least coming into focus. How much longer would it make sense to have party political broadcasts? Or to ban political advertising? Or to require the BBC to broadcast a daily report of parliamentary proceedings? (The BBC might still wish to do so voluntarily, just like the broadsheet daily papers.)

Such questions about the regulation of political broadcasting are part of a much larger 'disintegration'. This may be described as the increasing detachment of *political role* from *political place*. Electronic glut makes practically anywhere a place of public political communication. Political roles typically include supporting and promoting a party and ideology, seeking to influence a legislative programme, demonstrating leadership skills, representing constituents, and so on. Since most of those involve public communication, there are few places now where they cannot to some degree be performed.

Historically, political roles were linked closely to specific places. The best example is the House of Commons. That was where politicians behaved as representatives/legislators; the rules of communication were (and still are) extremely refined – what you call people; words you must and must not use; how you must phrase your questions to ministers. Reputations have conventionally been made and lost through performance in the Chamber.

As the late nineteenth-century press grew more interested in events outside the Chamber, rules of communication developed also for the political correspondents who frequented the Westminster lobbies. These chiefly involved devices to protect the confidentiality of sources. Electronic glut spreads the movement of parliamentary and political roles far beyond TV studios and conference halls. Politicians interviewed for BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme could speak in the 1990s from the radio car, which might be, as it were, in any old carpark. Interviewers staked out

territory on St Stephen's Green, to film backbenchers about events in the nearby Commons. But the best illustration of the ubiquity of electronic media was the virtual disappearance in the 1990s (and earlier in the USA) of a politician's private life. John Major's close cabinet colleague David Mellor, when exposed by electronic bug (though not on film) in 1992, was judged implicitly to be playing a political role, in that his affair with an actress was deemed inconsistent with the role of a cabinet minister. This was the 'message' the bug conveyed.

The argument that the system of political television began to disintegrate in the 1990s thus depends upon claims about the increasing proliferation of channels and types of delivery system; the elimination of a distinction between places which are 'for' politics and those which are not; a decreasing ability of governments to make rules about the conduct of public electronic political discourse; and a wider popular definition of what counts as political behaviour. Some of the ideas underlying this argument are elaborated further in the next section.

The division between these five stages in the intrusion of radio and TV into politics should not be made too sharply. But the stages help to emphasize how great that intrusion was, and how rapid, and to show how much the scope for argument about the forms and extent of broadcasting accountability increased.

Arenas, access and attitudes

This chapter concludes by looking briefly at the development of political broadcasting in a different way. Successive sections deal with the *arenas* in which politicians were seen and heard by broadcasters, the *rules of access*, and the *attitudes* of politicians and broadcasters to each other. Each was affected also by the developments in broadcasting technology, which steadily increased TV's capacity to cover politics in a more flexible, detailed and unobtrusive way.

Broadcasting arenas

'Arena' is here used to mean either a kind of activity, such as a broadcast interview, or a particular place, such as a TV studio or the chamber of

the Commons. Many places in which politics is conducted are deliberately public. The arenas in which the broadcasters made their earliest and biggest intrusions were naturally those in which the politicians' own chief purpose was public communication. The negotiations involved were more about details than basic principles. Thus a daily radio report of parliamentary proceedings began in 1945, and *The Week in Westminster* went back to 1929. Election campaigns are intense and concentrated efforts in competitive publicity, and it was predictable that they should have eventually been affected more than any other arenas by the intrusion of the broadcasters, even if the start was timorous for fear of the law. The party annual conferences were another arena which was obviously well suited to TV. On the other hand, the Cabinet, which has no political role of public argument and persuasion as a collective body independent of its members' individual parliamentary roles, imposed the same system of secretiveness and non-attributability upon broadcasters as upon the press.

The general calculation determining a political institution's willingness to let TV into its arenas was whether the results would affect the institution's performance of its proper tasks. The hesitations of the Commons best illustrate the point. As a popularly elected representative and deliberative body, it needed publicity. Yet if this were gained by methods which might diminish its ability to act according to members' views of the best interests of their constituents, such methods would be rejected. Critics feared TV would reduce the quality of debates and encourage exhibitionism and superficiality, and they argued that the primary purposes of the Commons should not be distorted in that way so as to achieve the secondary purpose of publicity.

While existing political arenas gradually adjusted to TV, a number of new arenas developed, which TV was also able to use. These were often designed for the purpose of publicity, taking advantage of convenient moments and locations. Their use became routine over the years. They included airport lounges, aeroplane steps and in-flight interviews, and the routine business of election press conferences, summit briefings and the like. Their routinization was shown by the provision of permanent TV interview rooms in likely locations from London Airport to the House of Lords.

The third type of arena whose growth can be traced through the years was the broadcasters' own programmes. Alongside the intrusion of the

broadcasters into the politicians' arenas (including their airplanes) came the politicians' intrusion into the broadcasters'. The development of political TV can be traced in the expansion of programmes from pioneer efforts like *In the News* (1950) and *Press Conference* (1952) through *Panorama* (1953), *Tonight* (1957) and many others with interchangeable self-explanatory names, joined after 1955 by their ITV equivalents (*This Week, World in Action, The World This Weekend*). Some were radio retreads, such as *Question Time*, modelled on Radio's *Any Questions.* Others incorporated formats popularized in the 1970s, such as phone-ins and chat shows.

Rules of access

Use of those various arenas – who might appear on programmes, how often, what they might say – was influenced by a kind of continuous negotiation between government or party managers and broadcasting executives. First, formal rules would be defined. Next, their application to particular cases required a gloss or interpretation. Then circumstances and personalities changed; new understandings would be reached. One day there would be a spectacular row. The air would clear. Then the formal rules would be redefined. There was not something as regular as a cycle, but part of the tension discussed at the start of the chapter was adjusted and kept in bounds by some such process.

The tendency between 1945 and 1995 was to relax controls that at first were tightly imposed. Party managers, in or out of government, did not want their members going on the air at will. Broadcasters, knowing their monopoly depended upon governments, did not wish to court interference through indiscretion. Citizens themselves counted only as audiences not as potential broadcasters.

The history of the *aide-mémoire*, the 'Fourteen-Days' rule and the Representation of the People Act, for instance, punctuated by crises such as Suez, the Falklands War and Northern Ireland, was one of greatly increased opportunities for nearly all kinds of politicians to broadcast, with more frequency and fewer restrictions of 'balance', and for citizens to make their own voices heard in a studio audience or on a phone-in. Of course, the change was only relative, and a few politicians, such as Irish extremists, found their opportunities actually decreased by a formal

ban between 1988 and 1994. For a party leader, the airwaves were more open in 1995 than in 1945 – but more open too for friends and foes, on terms that the leaders could not so firmly control as formerly.

Attitudes of politicians and broadcasters

Changing attitudes are difficult to capture. During most of the period 1945–95 the political decision-makers about broadcasting – ministers and party managers – were people adjusting to the new medium of TV in their maturity. At first, politicians used TV as an extension of radio. The face-to-camera address was typical. Gradually, executives like Mrs Goldie taught them the implications of the visual medium: to realize, for example, that 'vision is part of argument', and that on TV words may be in the service of pictures, not the other way around. Younger party politicians often provided the pressure to make their elders adapt, especially as the younger MPs regularly included a number of broadcasting professionals from the 1960s onwards, mainly at first in the Conservative party.

On the broadcasters' side, the historic shift was to accept TV on its own terms. In the early post-war days, a not untypical attitude was that TV news should be strictly limited – perhaps banned altogether – lest the integrity of the spoken word, and of news priorities related to intrinsic social values, might be defiled by the irrelevant charm of pictures. The underlying belief that politics *ought* to be about words, arguments, verbal and statistical facts, rather than about felt emotions charged through the eye, endured right through the 1980s and was strongly shared by many politicians. Some of the minor rows in the 1960s and 1970s, sometimes conducted in the letter columns of *The Times*, were about precisely such invasions of the linear flow of verbal information (in an interview, for example) by the techniques of a visual medium. The older politician might resent the use of voice-over commentaries superimposed on pictures, or the editing and transposing of sections of an interview to fit a picture sequence or create a 'dialogue' between interviewees; or the simple cuts made to fit a time slot and eliminate a slip of the tongue or a visual infelicity like a yawn. These were the kind of techniques which, as they developed, required the glossing and revising of the formal rules.

Early TV interviews and documentaries later looked stilted because audiences too learnt to receive programmes in the conventional forms gradually derived from the visual character of the medium. For a politician to talk face-to-camera for more than a few minutes, unrelieved, became unusual.

The history of political broadcasting, in terms of attitudes, was thus of changing expectations by politicians, broadcasters and audiences alike about what sort of behaviour would appear on the screen, what would look stilted, old fashioned, brash or unmannerly. Only if all three groups happened to apply broadly similar standards simultaneously, could there be lulls in the otherwise steady rumble of complaints, by viewers, politicians or among broadcasters themselves.

8 Media, Government and Politics: Prime Ministers and Parties

Prime ministers and the media

'The War Between Fleet Street and Downing Street'. That phrase made a good subtitle to the book by a veteran *Sunday Times* reporter, James Margach, about prime ministers and the press before and after the Second World War (Margach, 1978). The main title was *The Abuse of Power*, and it applied to prime ministers. News media typically saw themselves as victims of Downing Street, but prime ministers, equally, saw themselves as victims of the media. Chapter 7 viewed politics from the perspective of television. This one views media more from the perspective of politicians. The same functions are observed, but in a different light.

The media made work for prime ministers, whether they were 'victims' or not. Most of them seem on the whole to have found it tiresome. As the years went by after 1945, the work became harder, too, due chiefly to the growth of television. Prime ministers had to spend more time dealing with media: it became a more important part of the prime ministerial job description. This was partly a matter of personal performance, partly of management. Prime ministers had always been performers, but in Parliament and on the hustings. From the 1950s, as chapter 7 pointed out, they had to perform in the new studio arenas of TV and to adapt old hustings techniques to the cameras. Management involved a correspondingly more important press office at 10 Downing

Street, and tactical decisions about the endless permutations of when and how often to broadcast, on what programmes (hence to what audience), with what interviewers, and so on.

By 1995, the development of TV had arguably had three effects upon the premiership. First was the shift in the job description towards more time on media work. Second was a similar increase in the prime minister's role as an opinion leader or mobilizer. General elections, again, highlighted it. Prime ministers dominated their parties' news coverage from the elections of the 1960s onwards. In 1987, 44 per cent of all Conservative mentions in the news on TV and BBC Radio 4 were of Mrs Thatcher, and in 1992, 46 per cent were of John Major. The runner-up in 1987, party manager Norman Tebbit, received 15 per cent; but Chris Patten, in the corresponding position in 1992, managed only 9 per cent. Even two out of every five photos of Conservatives in the national dailies in 1987 were of Mrs Thatcher, and in 1992 nearly one-third were of John Major (Butler and Kavanagh, 1988, 1992).

The third effect was to draw the prime minister away from his or her natural parliamentary base. The overdue entry of the cameras to the Commons in 1989, made permanent the following year, did nothing to reverse this trend. The opportunity to watch Mrs Thatcher's resignation speech on TV, or the tense votes during the Maastricht treaty debates in July 1993, was as likely to feed newspaper readership as to reduce it. Expectations (fears, as many MPs felt) that the prime minister and Opposition Leader would hog the coverage were broadly confirmed, but not to excess. Prime minister's Question Time twice weekly accounted for 23 per cent of the parliamentary coverage on the BBC's Nine O'clock News and 38 per cent on News at Ten. Other parliamentary proceedings and other types of programme tended to emphasize ministers and frontbenchers, but somewhat less. Behaviour in the Chamber certainly changed, with Members sprucing up their appearance, sitting in good camera positions and tending to speak longer. Audience research showed that, at least to start with, TV was doing Parliament's reputation good (Franklin, 1994).

It remained an open question, however, how far in the longer run behaviour in different types of parliamentary occasions might diverge. For instance prime minister's Question Time could develop different manners and rhetoric from obscure and technical debates. In that way 'question time' would move figuratively away from Westminister, even

though the cameras had moved literally in there. It would become a kind of modified American presidential press conference, with MPs playing the part of journalists.

Compared with her predecessors, Mrs Thatcher spent less time anyway on the floor of the Commons. She also resisted the idea of open press conferences, except occasionally at international meetings where joint or competitive briefings by different leaders were not uncommon. Heath had tried grand, set-piece televised press conferences in the early 1970s. But these were unpopular, not least with print journalists who felt themselves stooges for the cameras, and they were soon abandoned.

Thatcher developed the 'doorstep' session outside Number 10, especially for announcements like that of South Georgia's recapture in the 1982 Falklands War. These were quick question-and-answer – and picture – opportunities more than detailed briefings. John Major used them more systematically, often alongside visitors such as President Yeltsin in July 1992 and – most notably – Irish prime minister Albert Reynolds for the announcement in December 1993 of Anglo-Irish peace talks. Beyond that, Major began to experiment with very occasional press conferences in the Downing Street garden (instantly compared to presidential performances in the White House rose garden). The first was on 13 June 1994. Another followed six months later on 16 January 1995; and Major chose this method to announce his resignation from the party leadership on 22 June 1995.

The claim that prime ministers were being drawn away from Westminster rests less on such specific examples than on the cumulative effects of TV coverage in all its forms outside Westminster. Its implications – wholly intangible – concern the nature of the prime minister's authority; the part contributed to it by public reputation and by colleagues' estimates of this; the methods open to a prime minister for managing Parliament and cabinet (whose support, of course, is a precondition of office); and, ultimately, the kind of career people must follow if they seek ministerial office. (Two Commonwealth prime ministers of the 1980s, Bob Hawke in Australia and Brian Mulroney in Canada, had spent very little time indeed in Parliament before becoming prime minister.)

Many of those factors themselves affect judgements about the possible 'presidentialization' of the premiership. American presidents are constitutionally excluded from the legislature, so the comparison cannot be

Table 8.1 Prime ministers and television

Prime minister (party)	*Born*	*First took office*	*Age on first taking office*	*Age when TV re-started (7 June 1946)*
C. R. Attlee (*Lab*)	3 January 1883	26 July 1945	62	63
W. S. Churchill (*Con*)	30 November 1874	[10 May 1940] 26 October 1951	76	71
A. Eden (*Con*)	12 June 1897	6 April 1955	57	48
H. Macmillan (*Con*)	10 February 1894	10 January 1957	62	52
A. Douglas-Home (*Con*)	2 July 1903	19 October 1963	60	42
J. H. Wilson (*Lab*)	11 March 1916	16 October 1964	48	30
E. G. Heath (*Con*)	9 July 1916	19 June 1970	53	29
[J. H. Wilson (*Lab*)]		[4 March 1974]		
L. J. Callaghan (*Lab*)	27 March 1912	5 April 1976	64	34
M. H. Thatcher (*Con*)	13 October 1925	4 May 1979	53	20
J. Major (*Con*)	29 March 1943	28 November 1990	47	3

made too closely. But just as presidential power, lacking a secure legislative party base, is conventionally described as 'the power to persuade', so it is plausible to argue that the 1970s and 1980s saw an increasingly presidential *style* almost pressed upon prime ministers by TV. Labour's choice of Neil Kinnock as leader for his communication skills, even though he had no great parliamentary reputation and experience, also supports the argument.

Prime ministers' individual relations with TV were touched on in the previous chapter and need little elaboration. Table 8.1, showing the age of post-war prime ministers when TV restarted and when each first took office, is a reminder of the extent to which the 'inaugurator' prime ministers – Attlee and Churchill – had to 'learn' TV when they were already at or beyond normal retirement age. In fact, of course, neither bothered to learn. Attlee had no need, since TV was in its political infancy, and he refused to appear at all. During Churchill's premiership, however, TV took off. Churchill therefore appeared in news bulletins and at the first televised Conservative annual party conference in 1954. He declined, however, to take part in a party political broadcast, even when pressed by party managers.

Eden, as we have seen, was the first prime minister to welcome television. He was judged an excellent TV performer, though still in a face-to-camera format. In the 1955 party election broadcasts, very shortly after becoming prime minister, he won the top audience ratings. Macmillan, succeeding him early in 1957, had an equally positive outlook, with several years of familiarity as a TV performer behind him and, as it turned out, nearly seven years ahead to refine his skills. He was a ready student of technique, winning plaudits from BBC professionals, and had been a keen participant in the first televised party political broadcast in 1953. He broke new ground with a televised Downing Street conversation with President Eisenhower – stilted by later standards but fascinating at the time. His premiership also covered the important political broadcasting innovations before and during the 1959 general election.

Alec Douglas-Home came to Downing Street in 1963 unexpectedly, as a result of Macmillan's sudden illness. But for recent legislation promoted, paradoxically, by Labour's Tony Benn (himself an inheritor of a peerage), Home would not have been able to renounce his earldom and enter the Commons anyway. He had little of Macmillan's taste for

TV, nor his aptitude (for example, he proved unable to master the autocue machine). Chiefly he is important in this context as the first party leader whom TV helped to destroy. Whether his TV performances actually contributed to the extremely narrow electoral defeat in 1964, when Labour won an overall majority of four, is difficult to judge. But parliamentary colleagues thought so, and this weighed in Home's decision to stand down as Conservative leader in 1965.

The prime ministers during most of what chapter 7 called the period of TV's political maturity were Harold Wilson and Ted Heath. Wilson, as chapter 7 argued, deserves the label of 'first TV prime minister' because more than anyone before him he met TV on its own ground. He had plenty of opportunity by now, of course, to observe his predecessors, to get TV experience in opposition – and also to study the Kennedy TV skills in the USA. Not only did he use the medium skilfully as a campaigner, but he introduced informality by 'breakfasting' on TV with David Frost (at that time mainly on the 'showbiz' side of TV) and by letting the cameras follow him, in shorts and shirtsleeves, on holiday.

Wilson obviously made mistakes. One of the most notorious was a face to camera address about devaluation of the pound in 1967 (when there was still a fixed exchange rate against the US dollar). This contained a damaging claim, technically correct but open to misconstruction, that the purchasing power of the pound would be unaffected. For his successor Heath that kind of mishap was all too typical. Heath almost never looked relaxed on camera. Crucially, he failed in February 1974 to impose through TV his own view of the central issue of the general election that had been provoked by a long miners' strike. Intended as a 'Who Governs?' election, it was seen by voters in fact as about economic issues, and Heath narrowly lost.

Callaghan as a performer proved adept at handling interviewers but was associated with no particular TV developments. The Thatcher decade up to 1990, on the other hand, was important in a variety of ways, all reflecting the extent to which broadcasting and political events had become interwoven. As a performer Mrs Thatcher had many triumphs. Her manner with interviewers, including the formidable and experienced such as Robin Day, often lost them the initiative and reduced them temporarily to silence – yet without apparently alienating viewers. She listened to advice from experts such as Gordon Reece (knighted for his

efforts) about how best to dress and groom herself for the cameras, how to pitch her voice. Political campaigns, not only in the three victorious general elections up to 1987 but during the Falklands War of 1982 and the year-long miners' strike of 1984–5, were planned and orchestrated with the help of marketing specialists, pollsters and advertising agencies (notably Saatchi and Saatchi). A BBC *Panorama* programme after the 1983 election was aptly titled 'The marketing of Maggie'. The veteran journalist and TV executive Geoffrey Cox summed her up as 'an extremely effective screen figure who uses actions as an alternative to words' (Cockerell, 1988, p. 255). She popped up in Ulster in a red beret and flak jacket, and in the Falklands soon after victory – always providing good pictures, demonstrating her concern and commitment.

Much of what was involved had become the bread and butter of political broadcasting. In North America, as Wilson observed, they had got there first. Labour, learning the lessons after a disastrous TV campaign in 1983, ditched Michael Foot (ironically, one of the most exciting current affairs broadcasters of the early 1950s), and set about grooming and presenting Neil Kinnock in comparable ways. Round the globe, indeed, politicians were doing the same thing.

The extra dimension in the Thatcher decade was the growth of controversy about broadcasting. Mrs Thatcher, like many of her colleagues, was ready to blame the broadcasters for bad news. Many of the crises she faced involved a sub-crisis about the media. In the Falklands, it was about the broadcasters' insistent evenhandedness and their counterclaims about aggressive news management. In the miners' strike it was, inevitably, about 'bias' (but this was a classic industrial dispute where all sides were bound to make that complaint). In the Westland crisis of 1986, ostensibly about a helicopter company but in fact about Mrs Thatcher's authority in the Cabinet, the row was about the legitimacy of leaking documents as a method of news management. Above all, there were rows about the reporting of Northern Ireland – generally about when and whether Republican extremists should be broadcast.

Previous governments long in office had had fewer rows. In the Conservative governments of 1951–64 there was less broadcasting to have rows about. The Suez crisis did indeed produce a major row, but the Macmillan years were largely trouble-free. 'Media sub-plots' in the prolonged Profumo crisis of 1963 – another that was implicitly a crisis

of political authority, despite its call-girl context – chiefly involved the role of the press, more than of broadcasting, in the initial exposures.

Next to Thatcher, Wilson was the prime minister who had most rows with the broadcasters – and whose length of office, though split, came closest to hers. Apart from the day to day niggles, one programme in particular reflected his sensitiveness. This was *Yesterday's Men*, a serious but not sombre look at the after-effect upon Labour ministers of being unexpectedly tumbled into opposition by the 1970 election. Wilson resented especially being asked what fee *The Sunday Times* was paying for his memoirs. He sought to 'punish' the BBC when back in office. But Mrs Thatcher, 10 years on, set about making the broadcasters accountable with more determination and as part of a wholesale restructuring of the broadcasting system.

Some of the tension between Mrs Thatcher and the media was concentrated on the Number 10 press office, headed by an outspoken Yorkshireman, Bernard Ingham. The work of the office was closely connected with the group of Downing Street reporters known collectively as 'the Lobby'. This had grown up as long ago as the 1880s, when reporters were increasingly keen to supplement their accounts of parliamentary debates, observed from the press gallery, with background stories about the ins and outs of party policies and personalities – which meant mingling with MPs in the lobbies and corridors outside the Commons chamber. In return for this privileged access, including an early sight of official documents, the journalists became the embodiment of discretion, keeping their sources of information anonymous or 'off the record'.

The Lobby correspondents were from the start a collective group: there were informal rules and a committee, and membership was strictly limited to one reporter per paper (and an extra ticket for the editor of *The Times*). Between the wars they began to meet for regular collective briefings – off the record – from ministers and other parliamentarians. Many stayed in the lobby for 20 years or more, barely distinguishable from longtime MPs, and operating both in competition with each other and as colleagues chasing the same sources (Tunstall, 1970). It was understandable that particularly important and sensitive wartime stories, such as Dunkirk and D-Day, were fed by the government through the Lobby.

With the massive growth of government legislation after 1945, the balance of lobby work began to shift further towards policy and away from personalities and the immediate context of debates. As the reporters

were not specialists, except in the business of Westminster and cabinet politics itself, they became more reliant too upon the collective briefings. At these, ministers might be accompanied by senior civil servants, to help explain, say, a forthcoming White Paper on anything from defence to agriculture. The Leader of the Commons and the Leader of the Opposition gave weekly briefings, too.

The key figure orchestrating the briefings (apart from the Opposition Leader's) was the prime minister's press secretary. He also briefed the lobby himself twice a day – once for the evening papers and once for the mornings. Pressure to increase the membership grew. The intimacy intrinsic to the system had led to an 'inner Lobby' of morning paper journalists and an 'outer Lobby' of Sunday, weekly and overseas papers. All the latter were excluded from the briefings and often from the lobby itself except once a week.

Membership became steadily diluted. First came the provincial evening papers in the 1940s; then 'alternate' members (that is to say, more than one, but not simultaneously). The Sunday papers became full members in 1961, the weeklies 10 years later, and finally the broadcasters. Multiple membership eventually followed. The 'inner/outer' distinction survived till the 1970s. But by 1995 the system was a much looser version of the elite corps of intimates in 1945, to such an extent that the prime minister's press secretary privately began to regard the daily briefings as on-the-record occasions.

Yet the principle of a mutual exchange between reporter and source remained. It was personified in the increasing importance of the Number 10 press secretary. British prime ministers themselves had no strong tradition of personal contact with journalists. This was partly a matter of class. They might mingle with editors and publishers – have known them at school or university, even – but rarely with reporters. This was as true for Churchill, who earned his keep by his pen, as for a patrician Old Etonian publisher such as Harold Macmillan.

The tradition was also an accident of personality and career. Eden, with a lifelong interest in foreign affairs, was certainly comfortable with diplomatic correspondents, who were perhaps a less earthy bunch than the Lobby. Attlee was hopeless about all aspects of news media. He only took to the news agency tape machines at Number 10 when he found they reported the cricket score. In Wilson journalists of all kinds for the first time found a prime minister who prided himself on knowing about

deadline times and news routines. This made his disillusion with the media when things went badly all the worse.

The decline of patrician prime ministers and the growth of unavoidable personal contact with journalists once the broadcasters moved in, brought prime ministers closer to the media. But it did not necessarily make them more regularly accessible. In particular, and compared with their counterparts elsewhere and with American presidents, they avoided the regular press conference. Even private meetings with the Lobby were rare until Wilson's time – and still rare after it.

The Number 10 press secretary was thus a key intermediary. Mr Attlee created the post out of a previously rudimentary information officer role. He appointed Francis Williams in 1945, to interpret to the press the brave new world of the Labour government. Attlee wanted someone in 'broad sympathy' with Labour, but not so obviously partisan as to alienate the Lobby. Williams, a substantial figure in every sense, who at length became a Peer, had been editor of the *Daily Herald* before the war and senior Ministry of Information official thereafter. He stayed two years and was a great success.

Like him, almost all of Williams' successors were journalists turned civil servants (including Ingham). A few became civil servants only for the duration; and one of these, Joe Haines, suspended an open partisanship only temporarily. He joined Harold Wilson's Downing Street office in 1969 from the old Labour *Sun*, stayed with him in opposition through the Heath years, and went back to Number 10 in 1974 for Wilson's two-year second term. Haines' predecessor, Trevor Lloyd-Hughes, was a provincial Lobby correspondent who in contrast became a permanent civil servant.

The importance of a press secretary in the post-war world was confirmed by the unsuccessful attempt of Winston Churchill to do without one in 1951. Eden needed no persuasion and made an imaginative appointment in William Clark, a diplomatic correspondent and early TV journalist. The sensitiveness of the secretary's position as an intermediary, interpreting the government and the press to each other, became clear in the Suez crisis. Clark was unsympathetic to Eden's hawkish line and the planned invasion of Egypt. Eden therefore found him increasingly ineffective, while the Lobby, on their side, found it difficult to know how far he spoke with his master's voice and how far with his own. In a difficult situation Clark resigned.

Ted Heath, like Eden, chose press secretaries with a foreign affairs bias. Both his appointees were senior career diplomats with experience in the Foreign Office news department. The choice reflected Heath's priority of legislating Britain's entry to the EEC. What they lacked in direct press experience, they made up in organizing skills and Whitehall know-how.

From Heath's time, the press office became larger, though even in 1990 Bernard Ingham had only five assistants plus secretarial backup. The work diversified. With Harold Wilson – and bigger jets – the Lobby journalists began to globetrot, and the press office was drawn into the logistics. The growth of TV brought a new medium, a faster rhythm, the need for new kinds of advice. The post developed four clear roles: *spokesman, adviser on media relations, agent* (or intermediary) dealing with news organizations, and *coordinator* of information services in all the Whitehall ministries. The latter became a bigger task in the 1960s, as the press employed a greater range of specialist correspondents, somewhat on the Lobby model, to cover social services, education, home affairs – most of the areas of government activity.

From the late 1950s, too, the Lobby and Number 10 system became occasionally an issue *in* politics. An early example was the sensation caused in 1959 when *The Times* splashed an unattributed story claiming Mr Macmillan had taken his Foreign Secretary's arm in a paternal grip and, in effect, warned him to expect the sack. The story appeared during a meeting of Foreign ministers in Geneva, preparing for a summit conference; and *The Times* reputation overseas meant the story was bound to be thought inspired. *The Times* had to write a calming leader ('Back to Sense'). The Foreign Secretary (Selwyn Lloyd) stayed put. Years later *The Times* reporter admitted Macmillan himself had been the source.

The tribunal conducting a post-mortem on the Vassall spy case in 1962 exposed the flimsy factual base on which unattributed stories could easily rest. Harold Wilson's disillusion with the Lobby, after an early honeymoon and a misguided attempt to treat them as reflective columnists rather than hard news reporters, led to unprecedented public discussion about the pros and cons of the system. *The Sunday Times* tried to institute a 'Whitehall Correspondent' to get beyond Westminster-based journalism into the civil service seats of policymaking, but Wilson was able to squash the experiment. In his second administration,

relations between the press office and the Lobby became so strained that Joe Haines suspended the daily collective briefings. They were restored by Mr Callaghan.

These briefings became more and more the focus of criticism in the Thatcher decade; less for their collective character than for their unattributability. This had become especially vulnerable as the anonymity of broadsheet journalism itself virtually disappeared in the 1960s. Critics claimed the system now gave Bernard Ingham too much scope to fly kites, put his own spin on the news agenda, dodge responsibility, exploit the Lobby tendency to 'pack journalism' – in short, privily to *manage* the media. As time went on, moreover, Ingham was criticized for behaving virtually like a minister. After more than 10 years of close understanding with Mrs Thatcher and speaking in her name, could the principle that he was simply a civil servant be sustained, even if he deliberately stayed away from party occasions and electioneering?

Wilson avoided such problems by employing a separate 'Parliamentary Press Liaison Officer', paid from party funds and working independently of Lloyd-Hughes and Haines (this was the future Labour minister, Gerald Kaufman). Harold Macmillan's way had been to appoint a Cabinet minister to look after political media strategy (including regular briefings). The first was Charles Hill, post-war favourite as 'the Radio Doctor', who became Chairman of the ITA (1963–7) and was impishly appointed by Wilson straight from there to the BBC. After him came Bill Deedes, already a veteran journalist, who later edited the *Daily Telegraph*.

If Mrs Thatcher had adopted either expedient, Bernard Ingham might have avoided some of the flak, not least from MPs. MPs especially resented the way in which he more than once sounded a ministerial death-knell with a remark about someone having become a 'semi-detached' member of the Cabinet. Ingham operated in a TV era. Compared even with Haines, he could not avoid being caught by the camera, popping up on the screen at Mrs Thatcher's shoulder, or briefing the media at summits.

John Major's arrival in Downing Street on 28 November 1990, as an extremely fresh face, provided a good opportunity to see how far all prime ministers now needed not only a Willie, as Mrs Thatcher famously said, but also a Bernard. (Willie Whitelaw was the senior adviser and wise man in her cabinet until 1987.) Major's experience suggested

unquestionably that he did, either at press secretary level or as a minister. Major took to Number 10 his press secretary at the Treasury, Gus O'Donnell, who stayed three years and returned at the beginning of 1994 to a senior economic job. He ran the office efficiently and was well liked by the press. But the slew of bad publicity that tumbled over the prime minister after the 1992 general election, with barely a let-up, surely required countering with tougher political direction and a secretary with Ingham's press background and ability to seize the initative.

Such a judgement is easily made. But the government now had a small majority, a fractious party and a revived Opposition. It is strictly possible that Major's historically low poll ratings resulted despite more than because of poor news management. His own media management skills, moreover, were said to be poor. He stepped up such traditional practices as dining with media moguls like Conrad Black and Rupert Murdoch. But according to one well-publicized story, the editor of the *Sun* ostentatiously put the phone down on him one day – and if this was not true, the fact of its circulation suggests a popular perception that it could have been and was typical. Bad luck produced the 'bastards' tape in July 1993, when the prime minister launched into a criticism of anti-European cabinet colleagues after a TV interview at Downing Street. He thought – wrongly – that the microphone was turned off. Next day the *Daily Mirror* offered readers a dial-a-tape service, and when this was banned by the telephone watchdog, the paper gave away free tapes instead.

Bad news management, in contrast, made the débâcle of Britain's forced departure from the European exchange rate mechanism in September 1992 worse; turned a muddle over the government's pit closure programme the following month into a mess; skewed a PM-sells-for-Britain trip to Japan in 1993 into an embarrassing leadership crisis sideshow; plugged a Back to Basics morality message in 1994, while signs of government 'sleaze' were repeatedly signalled in the media.

Obviously bad publicity was sometimes inescapable – for instance when ministers were exposed in unwise sexual relationships or personal friendships. O'Donnell's replacement on 31 January by a Foreign Office diplomat, Chris Meyer, made little practical difference. Meyer had greater experience, as a former head of the Foreign Office News Department. He protected the prime minister from the press more effectively on foreign trips. His lobby briefings perhaps had more pith

and fizz. Another innovation was a cabinet committee responsible for the presentation of policy. Chaired by the Chief Whip, it included civil servants and party managers and met on most weekday mornings. But the overall record increasingly showed that John Major personally lacked the skills necessary to cajole or browbeat media into putting his desired interpretation on events; and that his failure typified this administration as a whole. By the middle of 1994 he was being criticized more extensively in the press than any Conservative prime minister since before the Second World War.

John Major's experience therefore amply confirmed both the importance of efficient news operations and the tensions inescapable in a prime minister's relations with media. The crucial role (and visibility) of Labour's communications director, Peter Mandelson, in developing party strategy during Neil Kinnock's leadership from 1983 to 1992, showed that the judgement applied equally to prime-ministers-in-waiting. James Margach wrote about 'the War between Fleet Street and Downing Street' as a print journalist. TV had simply increased the number of battle fronts. Clearly prime ministers had to adjust to the needs of the media – and to beware them. But so too, as the experience of the Downing Street press office suggests, were they able, if the circumstances were right, to manage them.

Political parties and the press

The close historical links between parties and the press make a startling contrast with the isolation of the parties from broadcasting. Papers of all kinds – national and local, daily and weekly, newspapers and journals of opinion – have a natural affinity with parties. Politicians and voters have traditionally expected, and often banked on, press partisanship. Yet broadcasting has been hedged with non-partisanship, and party programmes have been stuck in the ghettos of the party political broadcasts.

Between 1945 and 1995 the press became less predictable and manageable for the parties, and therefore less satisfactory to them. This was true both for individual parties and for the party system as a whole. For the press, the result was an increasing risk that frustrated politicians, tempted rightly or wrongly to blame the press for their failures, might interfere with traditional rationales of 'press freedom'. For the political

system as a whole, there was less certainty that party politicians could reliably communicate with the electorate on the politicians' own terms. Where newspapers once were the clients of parties and were owned or subsidized by party financiers, politicians by the 1960s were the clients of the press. Clement Attlee could command the *Daily Herald*, which the Labour party controlled, in a way that Harold Wilson and his successors could not command the *Daily Mirror* (the only Labour stalwart after 1970). Wilson instead had to feed them Honours: there were at one point four or five peers in the Mirror Group. Mrs Thatcher had to flatter Conservative papers in the same way.

How well can a democracy work if the people cannot be sure they hear the authentic voice of their leaders? If the press did not play the party tune, if might not matter, provided that the broadcasters' stopwatch approach to political balance endured. But by 1995, as we have seen, this had been diluted and supplemented by the intrusion of political controversy. The relation between the parties and the press was therefore an important aspect of the general issue of media accountability.

The affinity between parties and newspapers is easily stated. People form parties to seek a common goal. Organization and campaigns require communication, and newspapers are a highly suitable medium: cheap, and easy to distribute. They are verbal, and politics is a verbal activity. Their contents tend to be broad, and parties are potentially concerned with the whole of a society's problems. The same social forces that find expression in a party tend to find expression also through the press. Parties are therefore bound almost by definition to be concerned with, and about, the press. Politicians across the board, from Lenin to Hitler, have vouched for the importance of newspapers as a focus of activity and a rallying voice for a party at the point of departure.

In general, then, we might expect to have found in 1945 a rough fit between the press and the party system. The policies of each party would be echoed in the columns of one or more national papers, with an overall balance between the strengths of the parties and of the press as a whole. But the fit was already imperfect. Table 8.2 gives a summary impression. Using general election years as benchmarks, the table can serve as the basis for an outline of how and why the pattern changed across the years.

For a start, there was an imbalance in the *number* of party papers. In 1945 this was not bad: four Conservative, two Labour, two Liberal (including the *Manchester Guardian*) and the Communist *Morning Star*

(omitted from the table). It became worse first as a result of the death of the *News Chronicle* in 1960, which removed the only mass circulation Liberal daily. Then the replacement of the Labour *Herald/Sun* by the Murdoch *Sun* – a successor only in name – made the Conservative/Labour balance more lopsided in the early 1970s. The foundation of the *Star* and late-1980s papers confirmed it.

Taking *circulation figures* into account (which means the quality – popular distinction too), the imbalance looks even worse. Table 8.2 shows that the Conservative share of general election votes was always lower than the total Conservative circulation. Until 1964 the difference lay within roughly 10 per cent. From then on, it was usually higher. The Labour party, in contrast, continually campaigned in the knowledge that more of its voters than of the Conservatives were likely to be reading the 'wrong' paper; and by 1979 these were in a majority – that is, more Labour voters were reading a Conservative than a Labour paper. Only once, in 1970, did Labour circulation match the Labour vote (in percentage terms). This distortion among the major parties was accentuated because the Liberal circulation, while the *News Chronicle* survived, nearly always exceeded the Liberal vote. Clearly many *Chronicle* readers were not Liberal voters.

Those comparisons give a fair idea of the trend in partisan imbalance, but they oversimplify. At any time from the mid-1970s, for instance, it would have taken only the *Sun* to transfer its loyalty to Labour for the imbalance to have toppled sharply in that direction and against the Conservatives – although the number of Conservative titles would still have been greater. Apart from that, figures alone say nothing about the nature of *editorial partisanship*, nor that of the *readers' partisanship*.

Many readers, to judge by opinion surveys, did not have a strong sense of the partisanship of their paper at all, and 'politics' ranked low on the scale of interest. In 1963 the first major British voting study found that only about half the sample named the party support of their paper correctly (for the loyalist *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Herald* the figure was three-quarters) (Butler and Stokes, 1971). Not until 1983 did the majority of *Sun* readers realize their paper was now Conservative (Butler and Kavanagh, 1984, p. 215). It is no surprise that pollsters generally found that papers had at least a plurality of readers supporting the same party as their paper, but that there was no overwhelming dominance. The exceptions, again, were the superloyal *Daily Herald* and *Daily*

Telegraph, and (when it started to count as a national daily) *The Financial Times*.

The degree of party support fluctuated, of course, with changes in voters' preferences. With the 1970s these became more volatile, culminating in the challenge of the Liberal/SDP Alliance party that in 1983 won almost as many votes as Labour. In 1983 and 1987, most Alliance voters read a paper supporting a Conservative or Labour victory. So did most Liberal Democrats in 1992. The correspondence between a paper's partisanship and its readers' thus became even less than earlier and was less consistent.

How far papers contributed to this volatility and *shaped* voting opinions remained extremely difficult to establish (Harrop, 1987). Party leaders were probably wise to assume at least some connection, just in case there was one. The issue attracted special interest in the wake of the Conservatives' unexpected 1992 election victory, when Neil Kinnock blamed the media and a *Sun* editorial crowed 'IT'S THE SUN WOT WON IT' (11 April 1992). The tabloids' final attacks did indeed coincide with a late Conservative swing in the last week. The particular point about the *Sun* was that the great majority of its readers were part of Labour's supposed natural constituency in the working class. But there was little distinctive about the swing among *Sun* readers. Readers of the Labour-supporting *Daily Mirror* swung too (Butler and Kavanagh, 1992). Clearly it would be absurd to suggest either that the press has no influence over voters at all, or that it can manipulate them at will. But the range of possible influences between and during election campaigns – over our knowledge, attitudes and actual behaviour – is so complex that it makes little sense to indulge in sweeping claims. Even the *Sun* itself retracted.

Trends in *editorial partisanship* can be measured by content analysis: laborious work of limited value unless it can be matched to reliable information about what people actually read and digest. Again, the simplest measures of trends are election campaigns, when partisanship is likely to be strongest.

For 30 years after the war the trend was away from full-blooded party bias. A study of the four general elections from 1966 to 1974 showed that papers consistently gave more space to reporting the party they supported editorially (Seymour-Ure, 1977). The same was doubtless true in earlier years. But *qualitative* bias is more difficult to judge. Some of it could be unintentional. For example, the way a paper chose to cover

Table 8.2 Newspaper partisanship at general elections, 1945–92

	Circulation (m) and party support													
	1945	*1950*	*1951*	*1955*	*1959*	*1964*	*1966*	*1970*	*1974*	*1974*	*1979*	*1983*	*1987*	*1992*
Daily Express	3.30	4.10	4.17	4.04	4.05	4.20	3.99	3.67	3.29	3.26	2.46	1.94	1.70	1.52
	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con
Daily	1.85	2.03	2.00	1.76	1.47	1.30	1.27	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Herald/Sun[a]	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab							
Daily Mail	1.70	2.22	2.27	2.07	2.07	2.40	2.46	1.94	1.73	1.76	1.97	1.83	1.76	1.67
	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con
Daily Mirror	2.40	4.60	4.51	4.73	4.50	5.08	5.02	4.85	4.29	4.26	3.78	3.27	3.12	2.90
	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab	Lab
Daily	0.90	0.78	0.79	0.95	1.16	0.85	0.84	0.84	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sketch/Graphic[b]	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con						
Daily Telegraph	0.81	0.98	1.00	1.06	1.18	1.32	1.34	1.39	1.42	1.42	1.36	1.28	1.15	1.03
	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con
(Manchester)	0.08	0.14	0.14	0.16	0.18	0.28	0.27	0.30	0.35	0.36	0.28	0.42	0.49	0.43
Guardian	Lib	Lib	Lib/Con	Lib/Con	Lab/Lib	Lab	Lab/Lib	Lab/Lib	Con/Lab/ Lib balance	More Lib influence	Lab	Not Con landslide	Lab	Lab more Lib Dems
News Chronicle	1.55	1.53	1.51	1.25	1.21	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib									
The Times	0.20	0.26	0.23	0.22	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.41	0.35	0.35	Not	0.32	0.44	0.39
	None	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	More Lib	Con/Lib	Con/Lib	Con/Lib	published	Con	Con	Con
Financial Times[c]	–	–	–	–	–	0.15	0.15	0.17	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.25	0.28	0.29
						Con	Uncommitted	Uncommitted	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Not Con majority
Sun	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.51	2.97	3.15	3.94	4.16	3.99	3.57
								Lab	Con	Coalition	Con	Con	Con	Con
Daily Star	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.88	1.31	1.29	0.81

Independent	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Con 0.29	Uncommitted 0.39
Today	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	Uncommitted 0.31	Uncommitted 0.53
Total circulation	12.79	16.64	16.62	16.24	16.07	15.84	15.59	15.08	14.60	14.76	14.88	14.78	Coalition 14.82	Con 13.53
Total votes cast	24.08	28.77	28.59	26.76	27.86	27.66	27.26	28.34	31.34	29.19	31.22	30.67	32.54	33.61
Conservative: % Circulation[d]	52	50	52	52	54	57	55	57	71	69	67	78	74	64
% Votes	40	43	48	50	49	43	42	46	38	36	44	42	42	42
Labour: % Circulation[d]	35	50	39	40	38	42	42	43	32	50	27	22	26	27
% Votes	48	46	49	46	44	44	48	43	37	39	37	28	31	34
Liberal: % Circulation[d]	13	10	10	9	9	–	3	5	5	26	–	–	2	5
% Votes	9	9	2	3	6	11	8	7	19	18	14	25	23	18

[a] *The Sun* replaced the *Daily Herald* in 1964. It was bought and relaunched by Rupert Murdoch in 1969.
[b] Named *Daily Graphic* 1946–52.
[c] Not counted as a general interest paper before 1964.
[d] Includes papers with divided support. Percentage may therefore add to more than 100. In 1974 there were general elections both in February and in October.
Sources: Royal Commission on the Press, 1974–7; Nuffield College election studies by D. E. Butler and co-authors. Circulation figures are for the periods covered by the elections.

a party's campaign might not suit that party. The press disliked 'quiet' elections, preferring plenty of substance and excitement. They liked clear-cut issues, that differentiated the parties and were 'real' (that is, consistent with media's view of political priorities). Yet parties – especially when in office – sometimes wanted a 'quiet election', like the Conservatives in 1955 and 1959 ('business as usual' kinds of campaign) and the 'Crisis? What crisis?' style of Callaghan in 1979 after the 'winter of (industrial and climatic) discontent'. Equally, parties' views of what were the important issues might differ from each others' and the press'. Labour in 1983 and 1987 had nothing whatever to gain from highlighting defence, a policy minefield for them. Press coverage of the Alliance in the 1980s was unlikely to please either of the established parties. The Conservatives were vulnerable on Europe in the 1990s.

Deliberate partisanship certainly changed, and almost as certainly declined, for 30 years after 1945. Many factors played a part, and most of them affected partisanship between elections too. There was a decline, first, in 'official' party loyalty. The hallmark of this, according to a 1950 commentator, was that all the paper's 'themes and leader subjects seemed to be raised first in speeches or party declarations' (Nicholas, 1951, p. 175). Such papers were represented best by the *Daily Herald*, because of its TUC control; but party ownership was not in fact a necessary condition. In 1945, the *Herald* arranged a great Labour election rally at the Albert Hall and its entire coverage was geared to securing a Labour victory. Even so loyal a Conservative paper as *The Daily Telegraph* could not have been as committed in its sympathies – following the party leadership and preaching orthodoxy, rather than taking initiatives of its own. The only papers in a comparable position to the *Herald* were the *Daily Worker*, whose fortunes declined fairly rapidly, and the *Reynolds' News/Sunday Citizen* owned by the Co-op branch of the Labour movement.

In the 1950s papers virtually abandoned election 'stunts', a traditional device intended to scare voters away from a party. In 1951, for instance, the *Daily Mirror* ran a crude 'Whose Finger on the Trigger?' campaign designed to discredit Winston Churchill, then in opposition, as a warmonger. Instead, election coverage became more balanced. By 1966, the *Mirror* was making a virtue out of 'First the Inquest – Then the Verdict', delaying its (predictable) declaration of Labour support until late in the campaign. From 1955 it became common for papers to feature articles contributed by leaders from each of the parties.

The expansion in the size of newspapers in the late 1950s gave much more space, too, for increasingly sophisticated analysis of the electoral process. Concepts like 'swing', 'marginals', 'image', became widely understood and did not fit easily into partisan polemic. Nor did opinion polls, and in the 1960s these became increasingly prominent. Previously, Gallup had the market virtually to itself, sponsored by the *News Chronicle*. The change came partly by an increase in competitors and partly by papers ceasing to treat them as valuable, copyrighted 'exclusives'. Instead, polls were milked for their publicity value, and other papers and broadcasters were encouraged to quote them.

Polls became the barometer of an election campaign. Papers often found themselves headlining polls showing a clear lead for a party they opposed – as did *The Daily Telegraph* in the landslide Labour election of 1966 or the *Mirror* in 1983, or the Conservative press at large in 1992. They had to gear their coverage to independent and increasingly reliable estimates of the electorate's mood, not to their own wishful thinking.

The prominence given to polls also increasingly made them a part of the campaign itself, since politicians obviously had to respond to them. In 1966 11 per cent of election headlines in the national dailies were about polls; in 1970, 25 per cent, and in February 1974, 18 per cent. The figures would not always be so high, but from the 1970s TV joined in too, with the broadcasters commissioning polls and using them to help structure their own coverage of issues in interview and discussion programmes. The broadcasting requirements for 'balance' clearly fitted the objective information of the polls very tidily. By the 1980s, parties themselves were using polls – both published and private – to fine-tune their campaigns.

Other influences making papers less partisan are more speculative. The spread of TV may have been one, for instance, but it is difficult to pin down. Arguably it was a bit more difficult to paint opponents in lurid colours, like Churchill in the 'Whose Finger . . . ?' campaign, when readers could see them on TV most nights. More subtlety, at least, was needed. Again, the tabloid tendency in the press was accompanied by a decline in detailed political coverage: the shift towards entertainment and feature items reduced the relevance of partisanship. Similarly, the proprietors of the 1960s and beyond were less committed to a party (and especially a political career) than the Beaverbrooks and Kemsleys of earlier years.

This last generalization needs treating with particular care. Murdoch, Maxwell, Stevens, Rowland, Black – the later owners – certainly came off the party fence. But they had no personal political career in mind. Often, they did not control their organizations' capital. Running conglomerates, they had more complex and international goals than the singleminded aims that enabled Beaverbrook to boast mischievously to the 1947 Press Commission that he ran his papers for propaganda and for no other purpose. In effect, party politicians had to *court* the loyalty of the later barons: it was, in principle, unreliable.

With the opening up of divisions between the radical Conservative party of the Thatcher era and the post-Wilson/Callaghan Labour party, the trend in press partisanship moved the other way again. The position was complicated by the centrist appeal of the Alliance parties. These attracted much support from journalists and broadcasters, many of whom were professionally inclined to 'a middle way'. But as Table 8.2 shows, news and feature column even-handedness was not reflected in editorial support. Moreover, the tabloid style and format of the 1980s suited the kind of graphic, assertive, unqualified partisanship reminiscent of the 1940s. The *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* in particular rediscovered the 'scare' story. Because TV had become the dominant source of news in election campaigns by 1979, one commentator suggests, 'straight news virtually vanished from the press, to be replaced by accounts that explicitly contained impressions and opinions' (Craik, 1987, p. 77). These were likely to reflect the Conservative sympathies of their organizations. In 1987 the weight of election coverage in the Conservative press favoured Labour – but much of it was knocking copy (Butler and Kavanagh, 1988).

By the time of the 1992 general election, 80 per cent of voters were reading a tabloid paper, compared with fewer than half in 1970. The tabloid style of partisanship reached distinctive new limits in the campaign by the *Sun*. This did not abandon the generic characteristics of a tabloid. The range of coverage was narrow. Major and Kinnock were treated as the personification of their parties (and the Liberal Democrats were ignored almost completely). The language too was reductive: campaigners constantly made 'gaffes' and 'clangers', and there was lots of knocking copy. But the *Sun* integrated pictures and text, fact and fantasy, politics and the non-political, in a unique and humorous blend. A double-page spread polled famous dead voters, quoting them verbatim through a clairvoyant. Queen Victoria would be voting for John Major:

rather him than the 'ginger jester' (Kinnock). Karl Marx and Stalin, on the other hand, plumped for Labour. So did the recently deceased fraudster Robert Maxwell: 'I see a lot of me in Neil Kinnock'. Another feature detailed 'Kinnock-flee zones', to which appalled voters could retreat in the event of a Labour victory. They included absurd locations (the Arctic Circle, Timbuktu, a space station), yet the text gave genuine factual information about weather, travel and living costs. A third feature was linked to a grotesque but genially overweight 'flabbogram' lady, posing seductively like a Page Three nymphet. The text, full of wordplay, claimed that a spoilsport Labour government would ban such harmless frivolities as pin-ups ('fat chance of fun'). Yet another double-page spread showed readers how to construct a soapbox like John Major's, when the prime minister started a successful street corner campaign. Obviously no one would be likely to make one, but the story drew attention to Major's positive qualities. Most striking of all was the front page on polling day. This was largely filled with a picture of Kinnock's head in a lightbulb, with a headline saying, 'IF KINNOCK WINS TODAY WILL THE LAST PERSON TO LEAVE BRITAIN PLEASE TURN OUT THE LIGHTS'. The message was simple: Britain under Labour would not be worth living in. But turn out the light, with a flick of the switch – or a cross on the ballot slip – and Kinnock too would be extinguished.

These stories were not positive untruths, in the everyday sense. Yet they dealt in fantasy more than fact. They did not use everyday kinds of evidence and rational argument. They made assertions, protected by humour and thus not easy to counter otherwise than humorously; and they backed them up with strong visual symbols. The lightbulb front page, on an attractive blue ground, became famous. The impact on voters was uncertain. But how exactly could such a campaign be opposed? Labour certainly had no answer in 1992.

The ironic aftermath of the 1992 election, however, was that the *Sun*, like the majority of the Conservative press, grew quickly disillusioned with the Major government and set about destablizing it. 'WHAT FOOLS WE ALL WERE', commented the *Sun* early in 1994. In 1993 the *Daily Mail* turned against Major and Lord Rees-Mogg wrote in *The Times* (which he formerly edited) that Major 'would probably have to go'. Sunday papers joined in, and soon only the *Daily Express* and *Sunday Express* were the foul weather friends the prime minister so

desperately needed. During the leadership election which he called and won in June/July 1995, the entire national press, except for those two papers, called for his replacement. It was difficult to believe that they would all give an unqualified endorsement to Labour at the next general election. But the belief that a Conservative prime minister can rely on a steady Conservative press had never been more clearly exposed as naive than in the last decade of the century. The predicament of the Alliance parties – plenty of coverage but not on their own terms (in the sense of having a paper supporting them editorially) – illustrates the lack of responsiveness in the press to changes in the party system. Could a new movement have got so far in the early 1900s without being in a position to start or buy a newspaper of its own? Probably not. Similar examples can easily be quoted. CND, the major mass movement of the post-war decades, never enjoyed the support of a national daily. The issues of Scottish and Welsh nationalism were continually restricted to regional media, except in by-elections and for a short period around the early 1970s. Northern Irish problems were perhaps improperly understood on the mainland because the metropolitan press and readers were for too long uninterested. The strength of popular feeling against British membership of the EEC in 1966 had no voice in the national press except, for a while, in the idiosyncratic Commonwealth-hankering *Daily Express*. In the 1975 national referendum on continued membership, there was no serious editorial opposition at all, beyond the tiny *Morning Star*. Well into the 1990s, government orthodoxy on Europe was echoed in the press. Minor parties (mainly the extremes of left and right) found themselves at any time more likely to get coverage on the basis of general news interest than of their manifestos. Most coverage for the Workers' Revolutionary Party in the 1979 election, for instance, came because one of its candidates was the actress Vanessa Redgrave. A right-wing party such as the National Front, lacking star appeal, got blow-up photo-publicity from its policy of mass marches (widely perceived as racially threatening): tabloid politics for a tabloid press.

By 1995, then, the press had become more detached from the party system in a variety of ways than in 1945. Parties had to work harder to get attention of the kind they wanted, and it was less reliable. For the press, the detachment raised in yet another form the question of accountability: who was responsible for the consequences of their political opinions? This question is examined in greater detail in chapter 10.

9 Media Accountability: Government Policymaking

Mass media may easily be taken for granted, since they are so much a part of everyday life. But if we are tempted to assume that, say, the spread of TV was therefore 'inevitable', we need only recall that in the mid-1950s many shrewd financiers thought ITV too risky to invest in.

It would be extremely difficult to give an exact answer to the question *why* media developed in the way they did between 1945 and 1995. Many social, political, economic and technical factors played a part. The developments themselves also varied widely. Some consisted in the creation of new examples of existing kinds of product using old technology – such as new national newspapers, radio stations and terrestrial TV channels. Others took the form of an 'old' type of product made by a new technology. Recorded music, for instance, was revolutionized first by the LP, then by stereo, audiotape and compact discs (Table 9.1 gives a very rough indication of dates and changing terminology). In other cases again, entire new media were produced by new technology – notably TV and, at the end of the period, the internet.

Those broad categories were blurred in practice by numerous detailed changes: colour TV, colour in newspapers, high quality colour in books; the replacement of open spools by tape cassettes; the growth of wide-screen film and the decline of black and white; the virtual eclipse of the hardback novel by the paperback.

The scale and scope of development make judgements of cause and effect depend very much upon one's general view of the nature of social

Table 9.1 Recorded music: changing technology, changing names

1940s	*1950s*	*1960s*	*1970s*	*1980s*
'Gramophone' (wind-up) →	'longplayer' / 'record player' →	'stereo system'	'record deck' →	'CD player'
			'amplifier' → 'music centre' →	'midi system'
			'speakers'	
	'tape recorder' →		'tape deck'	
'Record' ('disc') →	'78'			
	'EP' →	'single' →		'CD'
	'LP' →	'album' →	'cassette'	
	'tape recorder' →	'cassette recorder' / 'cassette' →	'personal stereo' / 'Walkman'	
'Radio' / 'Wireless' / 'Radiogram' →	'portable' →	'transistor' →	'personal stereo'	

change – how far it can be influenced by individuals rather than impersonal forces, how far controlled and fashioned deliberately. Among media people themselves, especially in the baronies of press and TV, 'great man' theories of history may well seem more persuasive than analyses of trends in education, leisure time, disposable income, world newsprint prices and distribution networks.

This chapter therefore concentrates more on how than why. In particular, it looks at the role of governments in media policy and innovation, for this is one of the means by which the media system in general may be held accountable to the public.

A policy of no policy?

At the end of the Second World War there was probably a general belief that British governments do not have media policies. A 'free press', after all, was the kind of ideal the Allies had been fighting for, whereas the Nazis burnt books and censored newspapers. A 'free press', for the British (certainly for its dominant classes), meant a press free from direct government control and shaped purely by market forces. Broadcasting, too, was deliberately organized at arm's length from government and presented as a public good, the servant of no one interest and particularly not of government.

Governments seemed to have, in other words, a traditional policy of no policy. The semblance was reinforced by the absence of specific press laws; by the emphasis in English law upon freedom of speech rather than freedom of inquiry; by the lack of a codified constitution in which a free press might be guaranteed (like in the USA) or limited; and by the lack of a Ministry of Communication (compare also the lack, equally uncommon elsewhere, of a Ministry of Justice). The Ministry of Information in the Second World War was unpopular both with politicians and public; it was dismantled as soon as possible, and its residual functions were put under Foreign Office responsibility in a harmless-sounding Central Office of Information. Similarly the minister with responsibility for broadcasting was the seemingly innocent Postmaster-General (until 1969), with an image of whistling friendliness and bicycle clips (and without even a seat in the Cabinet).

Popular belief in a policy of no policy very likely remained as strong into the 1990s. But of course the semblance was false. It is true that, as Jeremy Tunstall argues, British governments had a 'hostility towards a single media ministry, or a single set of strategic national media goals' (Tunstall, 1983, p. 238). Instead, policies were generally uncoordinated, reactive, expediential, partial and indirect; a matter of broad objectives and attitudes ('freedom of the press', 'an independent British film industry', 'public service broadcasting', 'deregulation') rather than of detailed programmes and plans. The whole thus added up to less than the sum of its parts. At one time or another, however, every aspect of media was the subject of policy – the structure and organization of whole industries (film, TV) or of particular parts (Channel 4); finance (no VAT on newspapers); content (official secrets and contempt laws); and audiences (compulsory TV licence fees).

The more media organizations became conglomerate, the more likely they were to encounter government policy in one of its forms. Conglomeration, too, provided the focus for a more comprehensive cross-media policy initiative in 1995 than any before – although even this was limited to ownership and market share. The Government proposed to allow newspaper groups with less than 20 per cent of total national newspaper circulation to expand into cable and satellite and to own up to 15 per cent of the TV market (defined by audience share – including the BBC), subject to a maximum of two terrestrial licences. They would also be allowed to control up to thirty-five radio licences (or 15 per cent of the market). The losers under this system would be Murdoch and the Mirror group, who owned 37 per cent and 26 per cent of press circulation at that date. ITV companies, reciprocally, would be allowed to buy newspapers up to a limit of 20 per cent of the newspaper market. Carlton and Meridian were known to be keen to take advantage of this possibility. Further proposals would let TV companies take a larger stake in independent producers and would double the circulation threshold for referring newspaper sales to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. There would be limits against local media monopolies, and a regulator with 'public interest' veto powers.

The Government's longer term plans – less likely to be in place before the next general election – were even more comprehensive. The aim was to define and measure the entire media market at national, regional and local levels, for TV (regardless of delivery form), radio and the press,

using audience or revenue as the basis. Guidelines would then be constructed by which a regulator could maintain desirable amounts of diversity and competition within an economically sound industry. This was indeed an ambitious scheme – and fraught with line-drawing problems, both about acceptable thresholds of concentration and the definition of 'media'.

Governments were always least ready to make policy directly affecting content and audiences. This may do much to explain the popular belief that they had no media policies at all. Moreover, the content/audience policies were often of general application, such as the laws on copyright, official secrets and libel, and they therefore did not seem specifically *media* policies. Even so, there were obvious and important government controls on a citizen's right to use a radio or TV receiver and to record programmes and make copies, or to sell and buy books below the publisher's fixed price and to photocopy them, or to deal in obscene publications at any price.

This point can be taken further. So pervasive are media that many types of government policy affected them without that having been the exclusive aim. Industrial relations are a good example. Labour government legislation in the mid-1970s, designed to help trade unions by facilitating the closed shop, threatened the freedom of newspaper editors to hire and fire. Ministers such as Michael Foot, an ex-Fleet Street editor steeped in journalistic tradition, anxiously sought ways to avoid this by such devices as a non-statutory journalists' charter. This conundrum disappeared in 1979 with the Labour government. Under its successor, conversely, management was strengthened. The introduction of new technology into Fleet Street by Eddie Shah and Rupert Murdoch was less difficult because of Thatcher government legislation limiting union rights, including the power to picket firms not directly involved in an industrial dispute ('secondary picketing') and the right of immunity from fines and the seizure of assets.

Similarly, in organization and finance, media were subject, of course, to the same vagaries of taxation, laws on fair trading, monopoly, foreign exchange and so on as everyone else. A late example of an unusually direct and unanticipated effect was the abolition of capital allowances against tax in the 1984 Budget. This threw out the financial calculations of the 30 companies that had just been awarded franchises to develop cable systems. The venture now looked far more risky, and the companies did indeed make slow progress until the 1990s.

Government policy affecting media, then, was often *indirect* in its motive but *direct* in its effect, and it was mainly about the structure and organization of media, their finance, and the development of technology, rather than about the content of what was communicated and the uses people made of it. A third general feature was governments' preference, as Tunstall puts it, for 'minimalist legislation and the voluntary principle' (Tunstall, 1983, p. 237). This was true both of Conservative governments (in office for about two-thirds of the period 1945–95) and Labour. Specific policies, clearly, were different from the decisions the other party would have taken if in office. A Labour government of the mid-1950s would not have introduced ITV; nor would Channel 4 have taken exactly the same shape under a Labour government in the 1980s. But Labour did not attempt to reconstruct the ITV system when it had the chance in the 1960s and 1970s (not surprisingly, in view of ITV's popularity with Labour voters); nor did the Conservatives give the third TV Channel to ITV in 1962. Similarly, Labour governments were as non-interventionist about Fleet Street after the Royal Commissions of 1947–9 and 1974–7 as the Conservative government after that of 1961–2.

Neither party, in other words, was doctrinaire in its treatment of media, and neither yielded to the temptation to legislate in detail and take direct powers. 'Direct powers' may sound implausibly authoritarian in the context of British media history, and certainly one may doubt that any post-war British Labour government would have felt such powers brought benefits worth the furore involved in legislating for them. But the term could include no more, say, than a broadcasting system financed directly by an annual parliamentary grant out of taxation. This was exactly how the Australian equivalent to the BBC was financed, yet the ABC (admittedly attracting a regular audience about the proportionate size only of BBC2) did not feel itself, therefore, a tool of government; on the contrary, it shared the same mystique of public service broadcasting as the BBC.

A Labour government that did try to intervene directly or in detail with either broadcasting or the press, in the sense of imposing direct statutory controls over structure and organization, would indeed have faced almighty opposition. Moreover, obvious expedients such as government press subsidies in the lean 1970s would paradoxically have kept Conservative papers flourishing at the cost, possibly, of the Labour *Daily Mirror*, which was profitable without subsidy. Why should a Labour

government keep a predominantly Tory Fleet Street going? In the early 1960s, when the Labour *Daily Herald* could have done with a subsidy, Labour was not in power.

Subsidies discriminating on party grounds, furthermore, would have been a crude device and have created immensely risky precedents. From the perspective of the Cabinet room, the prospect of a successor government doing to you what you have done to them presumably encouraged forbearance. Harold Wilson, prime minister in 1964, no doubt knew, for instance, that if the Attlee Government had taken powers to enable the prime minister to broadcast to the nation at will, Anthony Eden would have done just that during the Suez crisis of 1956, without the BBC necessarily being able to give the Opposition a right of reply.

Reduced to its simplest terms, the position was that the Conservatives did not need to intervene directly, since the heart of the press beat in the right place (at the times when it mattered, certainly until after 1992) and a public service broadcasting system was intrinsically conservative (with a small 'c'); while for Labour in office there were higher priorities, the electoral and political risks and costs were too great and the possibility of a successor government turning the precedent against them was an added disincentive.

In practice, as has been seen in previous chapters, every government used the ample opportunities within the limits of 'minimalist legislation and the voluntary principle' to try and steer broadcasting and, to a lesser extent, the press, along desired lines.

The broadcasting organizations provide the most prominent examples of 'minimalist legislation', the major difference between them (in this respect) being that the IBA regulated franchise holders and the BBC made programmes itself. The Cable Authority set up in 1985 followed the IBA model, but with a 'lighter touch' on programme standards. The 1990 Broadcasting Act (which brought cable back under the new Independent Television Commission) might seem a big step away from minimalism. It was highly prescriptive about programme requirements, for instance. It gave the ITC powers to fine licensees and revoke their licences. It had wide powers over broadcast advertising. On the other hand, there is no denying that, within the contradictory process of auction and quality threshold, the ITC itself was left to use its discretion – and the TV companies and advertising industry themselves were now

the first-line judges of the rules. Unlike the IBA, the ITC did not preview programmes and advertisements.

Standards – particularly complaints about them – were also handled by voluntary self-regulation. The Press Council, Broadcasting Complaints Commission, British Board of Film Censors and Advertising Standards Authority, were all set up by the industry concerned, either spontaneously or under legislation giving them generally weak powers. Here too the 1990 Broadcasting Act took a step towards compulsion. The Broadcasting Complaints Commission was put on a statutory basis, and a new Broadcasting Standards Council was set up. The former continued to deal with complaints by individuals about unfair treatment and invasion of privacy; while the BSC dealt with 'taste and decency', especially about sex and violence. But neither was given more than an advisory role. In areas of potential political controversy, too, governments left the broadcasting authorities to operate the policy of 'balance' themselves, however much in practice the politicians put pressure on them.

Fragmentation and unevenness

A fourth feature of government policy-making was its fragmented and compartmentalized quality. Over the years and at any one time a variety of ministers and departments were concerned. This was only to be expected, given the social prominence of media and the range of activities and purposes involved, say, in broadcasting. The Annan Committee pointed to the difficulties:

> Broadcasting is not an easy responsibility to place within the present structure. The Department of Industry seems unsuitable for such a highly cultural and politically sensitive activity. In the Department of Education and Science there might be a tendency to treat broadcasting as another branch of the arts or education and sacrifice its interests accordingly; how would its capital programme fare in competition with school buildings? Or the recently exhumed Department of Transport might become a Department of Communications, particularly if broadcasting were again linked to telecommunications (Annan, 1975, p. 50–1).

To trace the changes of departmental responsibility over the years would be complicated, for departments themselves were frequently reorganized and renamed. Table 9.2 refers to the early 1990s but has

Table 9.2 Selected departmental responsibilities for media policy, 1994

Medium	*Department*
Press	
Competition	Trade and Industry
Industrial relations	Employment
Radio and television	
General policy	National Heritage
Finance	Treasury
Overseas services	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Film	Trade and Industry
	Education and Science
Cable	National Heritage
	Trade and Industry
	Treasury
	Environment
	Employment
Satellite	National Heritage
	Trade and Industry

Note: The Departments of Trade and Industry were separate until combined under one minister in 1983. The Department of Employment was abolished in July 1995.

longer application, for the general pattern is unlikely to have changed greatly, allowing for the shifting importance of old and new media. If public corporations and other statutory authorities are included, Tunstall calculates that there were at least 30 public bodies involved in the making and implementation of British media policy by the end of the 1970s (Tunstall, 1983, p. 244). Few departments, one might feel, are left out, especially if 'indirect' media policy is included. Nor, of course, did they always see eye to eye on policy developments, so that the differences had to be resolved through yet more institutional machinery, such as interdepartmental committees. The 1990 Broadcasting Act was notoriously affected by such disagreements.

One simple measure of the fragmentation of policy is the way that the periodic major inquiries into the press and broadcasting went side by side but not hand in hand. Not until the late 1980s, in belated recognition of at least some of the implications of concentration and conglomeration, did the government became seriously interested in the question of cross-ownership.

Table 9.3 lists the press and broadcasting inquiries. These illustrate also the typical policy-making method for the main media, at least until the Thatcher era. A suitably distinguished figure, acceptable to the government of the day but not actively partisan, headed a committee balanced in regional, political and occupational terms. Evidence was canvassed and oral hearings held. Publication of the report was followed by a period of digestion, during which interested groups could lobby the relevant departments to try and get the recommendations adopted or changed. Eventually, government action might follow.

Publication of the committee's report thus looked like a culmination, but in practice the process was much more of a continuum. This was particularly true of broadcasting, since action was almost bound to follow in one form or another: the BBC Charter and ITV franchises came up regularly for renewal, new channels became available, and decisions had to be taken. Besides, those grand public deliberations happened within a system in which the departments and the broadcasting authorities were in

Table 9.3 Main government inquiries into press and broadcasting

(Date; chairman; number of submissions of evidence; scope)

Royal Commissions on the Press	*Committees on Broadcasting*
1947–9 Sir W. D. Ross (Academic) 163	*1949–51 Lord Beveridge* (Administrator; academic) 120[a]
Performance, control, management and ownership of the press, including finance and monopolistic tendencies	Constitution, control, finance and other general aspects of radio and TV
1961–2 Lord Shawcross (Lawyer; Labour politician) 168	*1960–2 Sir H. Pilkington* (Industrialist) 503
Economics and finance of the press; their effects upon its numbers and diversity	Future of broadcasting; whether additional services should be run by a different organization from the BBC/ITA
1974–7 Prof. O. R. McGregor (Academic) 247	*1974–7 Lord Annan* (Academic) 758
Independence, diversity and editorial standards of the press; including economics, management, labour relations, concentration; the Press Council	Future of broadcasting; constitution, organization, finance
	1985–6 Prof. A. Peacock (Academic) 842
	Alternative methods, including advertising, of financing the BBC; their implications

[a] Organizations only. Number of individuals not specified ('a large number').

a continuous dialogue (about details of finance and engineering, for example). 'Good broadcasting is a practice, not a prescription', commented the Pilkington Committee. The formation of policy thus merged into its implementation; much of the process was organic and evolutionary. During Mrs Thatcher's administration the grand inquiry fell into disuse (not only for media investigations). She preferred quick analyses, often by internal departmental bodies, with interested parties perhaps being able to comment on a subsequent green or white paper.

The press inquiries were rather different. Unlike broadcasting, the press had no parent department and no franchises for periodic renewal. The press inquiries were triggered by political hand-wringing about the prospects and consequences of concentration and contraction. Not much came out of them: they may have caused a ripple of public awareness and forced journalists to reflect upon their industry. They epitomized governments' continuing policy of no policy. Only one, the McGregor Commission, brought itself to recommend public subsidy, to help Fleet Street introduce new technology and cut through the tangle of union resistance, but the Callaghan Government declined to be drawn in. Earlier, in 1965, the Wilson government followed up a Shawcross Commission recommendation for legislation to check press mergers, through the Monopolies Commission. But this did nothing to prevent takeovers by *non*-press groups (that is, conglomeration) and left ministers with wide discretion over whether particular cases should be referred to the Commission at all.

A fifth feature of governments' media policy was the unevenness of their interest. This was an aspect of their focus on technology and organization, rather than on use and users. Right up to the 1990s Broadcasting policy, for instance, was determined at root by the limitations on available airwaves; while such policy as existed for the press had more to do with content, since there was no problem in principle of a finite number of possible papers. From the viewpoint of users, there was an element of arbitrariness in this practice. Policies on film and on TV were substantially different, yet increasingly, with the decline of cinema-going, the two overlapped (most films being seen on TV). Again, the Thatcher government's policy imposed few restrictions on the contents of cable, treating it more like the press than TV, even though cable programmes would be putting out familiar film and TV material. A further example might be radio and audio-tapes/discs. These were

overwhelmingly used for music; yet there was scarcely any policy about records at all, while radio was subject to careful regulation.

What these anomalies surely reflect is a characteristic politician's view that some media – especially those concerned with news – were, so to speak, 'for' politics while others were not. The press, radio and TV were a continual preoccupation of politicians: film, books, audio-tapes and records were not. The preoccupation stemmed chiefly from the importance credited to the former as major influences over the formation of popular opinion and as media through which public and politicians communicated with each other. Media that only 'entertained' (rather than 'informed') seemed less significant. Thus the sport, education and showbiz elements in broadcasting were able to carry all manner of political undertones without being subject to 'balance'. Policy about film, books, tapes and pop music was concerned not with politics but with social values and taste (obscenity, pornography) or economic and industrial goals.

Government media policy, further, generally failed to distinguish between the non-political and the non-partisan: 'politics' meant 'party politics'. The distinction is best illustrated by TV drama. It was easier in the 1970s and 1980s to make a radical political statement – about unemployment, racism, Northern Ireland, nuclear weapons and so on – in a TV play than in a documentary or current affairs programme. A classic example is the innocently intended documentary *Real Lives* (1985). This set out to show the daily round in the contrasting lives of two northern Irish Republican and Protestant leaders. The Government's outrage led first to the programme being stopped and re-edited before broadcast, and secondly to the dismissal of the Director-General, Alasdair Milne (Milne, 1988). Similarly, pop music increasingly acquired political content; yet apart from a few Labour enthusiasts, parliamentary politicians failed to see pop music as 'for' politics. In the broader world of showbiz, the 1983 general election saw a greater involvement than before by leading personalities with party campaigns, but on no great scale. Again, while sport became a growing issue in international politics in the 1970s, sport in media was left alone by politicians, except for such quirks for the 1990 Broadcasting Act's list of events which were not to be bought up by subscription channels. Overall, media policy throughout the period reflected a view that the political media – which need regulating in some way to avoid or ensure certain political qualities – were those with a clear partisan interest.

The results of these fragmented, compartmentalized and uneven policies can be summed up in the ease with which inconsistencies may be paired off, like tricks in a card game:

- For much of the post-war period there were twice as many TV organizations as Fleet Street proprietors. The former were 'publicly controlled'; the latter were treated as in a 'free market'.
- The sale of newspapers could be subject to approval by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; the sale of book publishers was not. Until after 1993 the sale of a TV franchise was forbidden.
- Print media were subject to the Obscene Publications Act; broadcast media (until 1990) were not.
- Broadcasts had to be politically non-partisan; newspapers were traditionally expected to be partisan.
- Churches and political parties were excluded from holding cable franchises: there was no bar on them owning newspapers.
- Cable, under Thatcher policy, was to be 'entertainment led'; broadcast TV was statutorily obliged to 'inform, educate and entertain', in that order.
- Newspapers and books were zero-rated for VAT; records, tapes and TV sets were not.
- The film production industry was subsidised; Governments persistently refused to help Fleet Street even in the black period of the early 1970s.
- Book publishers were permitted to enforce resale price maintenance; record and tape manufacturers were not.
- Foreign investment and programmes were limited in terrestrial TV; no comparable rules restricted the press.

Innovation and reaction: protectionism and competition

In addition to those contrasts, media policy can also be characterized by two more general sets of opposites:

- active/innovative versus reactive
- protectionist versus competitive.

Policy on the press was mostly reactive. Each of the three Royal Commissions was set up when political anxieties had reached a certain

pitch. The 1961 Commission was inspired specifically by the death of the *News Chronicle*, and the legislation subjecting press mergers to Monopolies Commission scrutiny came in direct reaction. The guarantee to the local press of investment opportunities in ILR companies when the commercial radio system started was in reaction to fears that the press might be badly damaged by loss of advertising revenue.

Parts of broadcasting policy were reactive too. Radio 1 and local radio owed much to the initiative of the pirates and, later, to clandestine community stations. The Department of Trade and Industry reluctantly started issuing satellite dish licences to private citizens in 1985 when it was clear that people were erecting them anyway. The Peacock Committee on BBC finance was provoked by the increasingly vulnerable licence fee system. The very introduction of ITV, it might be argued, was in reaction to an extremely well organized lobby. The BBC itself was set up, initially as a joint stock company, in reaction to the growing activities of Marconi and other private broadcasters and receiving-set manufacturers.

Broadcasting in general, however, must be judged an 'active' policy area. The establishment of the BBC was a major creative act of social and cultural policy. As the medium developed from radio to TV and then by the proliferation of channels, policy became a mixture of initiative and response. As Howkins puts it, 'Government has intervened at certain turning points but in each case has been notable for listening to and agreeing with the constituency of professional broadcasters rather than imposing its own ideas and interests' (Howkins, 1982, p. 63). With cable and DBS (direct broadcasting by satellite) in the 1980s, the Thatcher government was more interventionist, seeing these developments through very rosy spectacles as instruments of industrial and employment policy and seeking to move ahead at a great pace compared with the deliberation that preceded the introduction of BBC2 and Channel 4. Later, the reconstruction of the entire broadcasting system in the 1990 Broadcasting Act was the most 'active' policy since the 1920s. This was a determined break with the attitudes Howkins describes. As chapter 4 described in detail, the Act enshrined the 'auction principle', according to which franchises for the existing ITV channel and for a new Channel 5 were to be awarded to the highest bidder, subject to a minimum 'quality threshold'. In response to criticism, the government gave more weight to this threshold as the Bill went through Parliament; but it was greeted with general gloom by established public service

broadcasters. The process leading up to the renewal of the BBC's Charter in 1996 seemed closer to the Howkins version, but many people would argue that this was chiefly because the BBC was reforming itself in the direction which the government wanted anyway.

On the protectionist/competitive dimension, film was the best example of protectionism. From an early date it was clear that a British film industry would not survive without import quotas against Hollywood (imposed in 1927) and, later, a positive subsidy. This was engineered through a combination of a levy on cinema seat prices (made statutory in 1957 but long predating that), which was fed back into the industry, and – for a time – a system of capital funding through the National Film Finance Corporation, founded in 1949 but later abolished.

Minor examples of protectionism include the previously mentioned press entitlement to ILR shares; the net book agreement forcing booksellers to retail new books at the price fixed by the publisher; import quotas in TV programming; and the 'must carry' requirement obliging cable stations to transmit the four BBC and ITV channels. In contrast, policy towards press mergers aimed to stimulate 'competition', with few signs (apart from zero-rating for VAT and exemption from its predecessor, purchase tax) of the financial cushioning of the press in general against competition from other media, or of measures to maintain any particular number or type of national newspapers. Competition, similarly, was forced on British Telecom by the Telecommunications Act of 1981, both in minor matters such as the sale of telephone sets and major ones such as the provision of an alternative service (very slow to get going) by the Mercury consortium.

Fragmented, compartmentalized, anomalous, uneven. But how far is it really fair to call government media policies 'inconsistent' or, as Curran and Seaton do, 'contradictory' (Curran and Seaton, 1988, chapter 18)? The question depends on the context of policy and directs attention back to the issue of media coherence. Media policy could be consistent, surely, only if there were a common or consistent set of purposes media fulfilled – if they were all *news* media, for instance, or were all in a market that (unlike TV) could in principle have unlimited suppliers. During the post-war period, however, media did not in fact have such common features. Media were popularly defined in differing ways, as suggested in chapter 2: film, by location (the cinema); newspapers and magazines, by the physical product and distribution cycle; books and tapes, by the

physical product; radio and TV (indirectly, perhaps) by a receiving apparatus; cable and satellite, by a means of distribution; video and sound records, by their uses. Implicit in those differences (liable to change, and not always clear cut) were varying purposes, as illustrated in chapter 6: news, entertainment, education, information. Governments imposed no unity of social purpose upon them, nor treated them consistently either as economic or as technical goods. Without such consistency of approach, as there was towards what constituted defence, social services or transport, for example, there could be no department of media and no deliberate consistency of policy. Governments certainly had plenty of media policies in 1945–95, but they were no nearer a single policy in 1995 than at the start.

10 Media Accountability: Markets, Self-Regulation and the Law

If government policy about media was so spotty, how and where else, if at all, could media be held accountable? The question might lead in a variety of directions. The big media organizations were not monoliths: they had internal lines of accountability. A Fleet Street editor, for instance, used to have great authority over his staff (though the completely 'sovereign editor' was always largely a myth). Then, in the increasingly cost-conscious 1970s, financial managers took more control. In either case, there was a line of accountability from bottom to top of the organization.

Looked at differently, journalists always had a large measure of autonomy, irrespective of charts. They were accountable simply to their consciences for the truthfulness of their reporting, and editors had to take them on trust. On the other hand again, for 30 years from the mid-1950s the entire editorial enterprise was arguably subordinate to the production unions. Trade union power was only very occasionally used to black specific articles, cartoons and advertisements (on subjects such as industrial relations and South Africa), but it was a looming presence in all calculations about investment, modernization of plant and general planning. By the late 1970s, in one editor's phrase, 'Fleet Street was an industry at war'. Stoppages were commonplace, and on some papers disputes were taking up to 80 or 90 per cent of middle management's

time (Jenkins, 1979, pp. 69, 108). In ITV, the unions successfully enforced unnecessarily high manning levels (judged by international standards) in studio and camera crews, right through the 1980s.

Yet another claim could be that newspapers and ITV companies were chiefly accountable to the needs of advertisers for media audiences that fitted their product markets. As Curran and Seaton put it, 'Commercial television produces audiences not programmes' (1988, p. 193). Of this, there could be no more striking example in the national press than the viability of *The Financial Times* with a low six-figure sale in 1960 and the contrasting unprofitability of the *News Chronicle* and *Daily Herald* with sales over a million. The media barons may have looked like autocrats to the outside world, but often that cannot have been how they felt.

To pursue those arguments, however, would be to take a very wide view of 'accountability' – to identify it virtually with any type of influence over media people and output. On a narrower view, accountability refers not to the internal power relations of media but to the arguments and arrangements through which they justified themselves externally to the public. The issue is legitimacy. The question is, therefore, not whether, say, newspapers were in the pockets of their advertisers but how, if they were, they could account for what they published.

The natural preference of media was understandably for *self-regulation* – independence from any kind of external accountability beyond the market. Apart from that, there were the courts, with laws such as libel and the Official Secrets Act, which media found a continual thorn in the flesh. In between, a kind of halfway house developed over the years after 1945. Typically this took the form of a body exercizing *collective*, industry-wide self-regulation, such as the Press Council (reorganised as the Press Complaints Commission) and the Advertising Standards Authority. These bodies may be viewed as outposts in the media defences against regulation by complete outsiders. By 1995, for the press and broadcasting at least, they were badly bomb-damaged. 'Right of reply' and privacy legislation were a real possibility, and a new Broadcasting Standards Council had been set up, on a statutory basis and quite outside the control of the broadcasters.

This chapter follows these distinctions by dealing first with the courts, secondly with industry-wide regulation and thirdly with the rationales of self-regulation.

Media and the law

People in media would fret about the law. Schooled to believe in 'free speech', they tended to think themselves the best judges of what, when and how things should be said and to resist the idea that courts were superior judges of the public interest. They looked with envy at the USA, where a free press was guaranteed in the constitution and libel laws were weak.

The general problem for media throughout the period 1945–95 was the *uncertainty* of the law, its occasional *severity* and the *inhibitions* these caused. From the media viewpoint, the position got worse as the years passed, especially in the second half of the 1980s.

The range of legislation that could affect media contents was always bound to be wide. It included laws about trade descriptions, race relations, the rehabilitation of offenders, the prevention of terrorism, the police and criminal evidence, and data protection. These affected the flow of information in various ways, including personal rights to privacy (about health or criminal records, for example) that went far wider than publication of stories in the news media.

Even in the obvious media areas, such as libel, the range of laws affecting media was wide. It included fairly arcane examples like 'Crown Privilege' and Parliament's power to punish damaging criticism of MPs. The fact that such measures were rarely used after 1945 simply added to their unpredictability if they were. Moreover, like the H-bomb, an inhibiting sanction need not actually be used in order to influence day to day events.

Four kinds of media contents were most at risk. One kind was the potential *libel.* Another was books, films, plays, magazines – mainly fiction, whereas libel dealt with claims of fact – that offended laws about '*morality*'. This chiefly meant obscenity and once or twice, to general surprise, blasphemy. Third were contents making *disclosures*, which the courts thought were premature (information prejudicing a defendant's fair trial, for example), or which revealed secrets, usually about defence. Finally there were a few cases involving the *refusal of journalists themselves to disclose sources of information* – usually, again, leaks about defence and security.

The law thus affected both sides of media work: not only publishing things, but finding them out beforehand. Some of the best one-liners

reflect this duality: 'The law emphasizes freedom of speech more than freedom of enquiry', 'the law protects the individual interest over the public interest', 'the law places the right to a fair trial above the right of free speech', and so on.

Little of the uncertainty followed changes in the law, for these were few. The libel laws were slightly relaxed in the Defamation Act of 1952, which made justification easier as a defence. But 10 years later Cecil King, *Daily Mirror* chairman, could easily back his claim that libel was still 'an absolute nightmare', and the former Attorney-General Lord Shawcross could grumble that the operation of the law was at fault even if its substance had improved. There were other minor improvements. For instance, a three-year limitation period was introduced under the Administration of Justice Act (1985), which required proceedings to be started within that time. Then in 1990 the Courts and Legal Services Act gave the Court of Appeal power to vary a jury award which it considered too big or too small. *The People* benefitted from this in 1993, when a £250,000 award to TV star Esther Rantzen was cut to £110,000. The Official Secrets Act, whose notorious section 2 was fit to be 'pensioned off', said a judge in 1971, was reformed only in 1989.

Those were the laws that set leader writers thundering about the 'fourth estate'. In addition, a new Obscene Publications Act was passed in 1959, and the unsuccessful prosecution of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* the following year in a plum pudding of a trial, showed it could have liberal effects. That reform, however, made the law no more certain: cases still turned on decisions about the vague criterion of 'a tendency to deprave and corrupt'. Contempt of court, too, was reformed in 1981. This is a good example of a law having direct influence on the day-to-day behaviour of media yet without many cases arising in the courts.

Uncertainty was due to less tangible causes. One was simple chance. Would an unwitting libel be spotted? Would the victim choose to sue? How would the jury jump? With official secrets, would the government decide to make an issue of a leak? Would they prosecute the paper that published it, or just the leaker? Again, would a litigant resort to some cobwebby piece of legislation like the Blasphemy Act? This was used by the Christian moralist Mrs Mary Whitehouse to prosecute the magazine *Gay News* in 1977. The editor, who was fined £500 (and the paper £1,000), had published a poem describing the emotional response of a Roman centurion to the crucifixion of Christ. The financier James

Goldsmith, similarly, sought to bring a highly unusual charge of criminal libel against the magazine *Private Eye* in 1976 for allegations linking him to the unexplained disappearance of Lord Lucan. Unlike civil libel, the normal kind, truth was no defence to criminal libel. It was judged by intention and results (would it cause a breach of the peace?) and the object of the prosecution was punishment. *Private Eye*'s editor could have gone to prison if the case had gone to court. Goldsmith changed his mind, however, possibly because he was currently interested in becoming a Fleet street proprietor himself (Ingrams, 1979).

Secondly, uncertainty came from changing public attitudes. Taste changed, of course. By the standards of 1995, most of the inhibitions about the language and depiction of sexuality at issue 30 years before in the *Lady Chatterley* case looked ludicrously prudish. Pornography, on the other hand, was still safe for official censorship in 1995. So was the sado-masochism of video-nasties, banned under legislation of 1985. People were starting to worry, too, about pornography on the Internet.

In other areas the implications of changing attitudes were more complicated. The balance between secrecy and privacy might cause difficulty, for example. 'Privacy' was valued, 'secrecy' in general disapproved. Did other people have a right to know whether you had a record of mental illness or imprisonment, or whether you were HIV positive? The conflict between a collective public interest and an individual private interest is endemic in journalism. Assertion of the former was a frequent tabloid justification for prurient disregard of the latter.

Over the years, pressure groups pulled in opposite directions. A 'freedom of information lobby' fought unnecessary bureaucratic secrecy, lending its weight to various unsuccessful backbench Freedom of Information Bills in the Thatcher and Major eras. Yet at the same time consumer and welfare groups lobbied for greater personal privacy. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act of 1974, for instance, made it legal to suppress details of certain criminal convictions after the lapse of five years, and the Data Protection Act put strict limits on the disclosure of personal details held on computer.

The other side of the matter was changing fashion among media. This had a more direct effect upon the laws with which media clashed. The incidence of Official Secrets cases, for instance, varied roughly with media interest in defence. Wars and nuclear weaponry provided the benchmarks. More broadly, the fashion for 'investigative journalism',

which was at its peak between 1967 and 1979 and was epitomized in *The Sunday Times*' long campaign to expose the full story of the deforming ante-natal sedative drug thalidomide, was bound to produce cases of libel and contempt, injunctions against publication, appeals to the 'confidence' laws, charges under the Official Secrets Acts, and the many refinements shaped by clever lawyers backed by large corporate resources.

The thalidomide story went back to the early 1960s. The drug was taken off the market in 1961 after some 450 British families had been affected. After 10 years, only about 60 claims against the company had been settled. *The Sunday Times* wanted to find out how the drug had come to be marketed and also to campaign for better compensation. The problem with this was that since dozens of law suits between Distillers and the families were pending, the paper's articles might prejudice legal proceedings, until the last claim was settled.

The paper published one article in 1968 and got away with it, because it was about the European developer of the drug. Another, in 1972, led to a High Court ban on what had been planned as the next in a series – and had been sent to Distillers in draft, by agreement. The compensation campaign, meanwhile, was a great success, once parliamentary momentum and media interest had worked up. Distillers raised their compensation from £3.25 million to £20 million, and eventually the government helped. But *The Sunday Times* article on the cause of the tragedy was still banned. The ban was overturned in the Court of Appeal – and then reinstated in the House of Lords. Because it used Distillers documents acquired without the company's consent, it was also banned under the law of confidence. Not till 1976, when nearly all the families' claims had been settled, did the High Court lift the original injunction. But *The Sunday Times* wanted to prove its point about the 'public interest' nature of the issue and took the case to the European Court of Human Rights. There it won a gratifying victory, when the Court declared the House of Lords ruling had infringed the European Convention on Human Rights clause on free speech. This judgement led to the liberalization of the law on contempt of court in 1981. The whole legal effort, the campaign, and the essential background research, had been massive, and massively expensive, yet clearly justified in the end (Evans, 1984).

In the 1980s the competitive edge went out of investigative journalism. The focus shifted to tabloid competition, in which truthfulness often took second place to sensationalism and sums up to £1 million changed

hands in libel actions, and public concern focussed on invasion of privacy. The big secrecy trials came less from media resourcefulness than from the whistle-blowing enterprize of civil servants such as Clive Ponting (acquitted, 1984), Sarah Tisdall (six months sentence, 1984) and Peter Wright (*Spycatcher*, out of reach in Tasmania, 1985–8).

An impression of these fluctuations and uncertainties can be gained by tracing cases through the years. A spicey libel case was always good media copy: running story, strong on human interest, outcome uncertain till the last minute, with the denouement anything from a contemptuous 'farthing damages' to a tax-free sum rivalling a win on the National Lottery. An extreme example of some of those features was the 'McLibel' case, which began in June 1994 and was still running more than a year later. To protect its reputation, the fast food chain McDonald's sued two unemployed environmentalists for allegations in a leaflet, *What's Wrong With McDonald's* ('McDisease, McProfits, McDeadly, McHunger'). Having nothing to lose, the activists conducted their own defence and ploughed on – embarrassingly, from the company's point of view. Cases which attracted most attention in the press, like this one, often involved people or things already in the public eye.

One of the earliest post-war cases of this kind was brought by Harold Laski, a well known LSE political science professor who was also chairman of the Labour party's National Executive Committee during the general election year of 1945. Laski played a prominent role (in some ways tiresome to Mr Attlee) in the campaign. Several papers, including the *Daily Express*, reported him as saying Labour would have to use violence if it could not win socialism by general consent. Laski thought himself libelled. He claimed to have said, in effect, that if labour could not get socialism even when it had general consent, it would have to use violence. Laski lost. His costs were paid by public subscription. But politicians became wary of fighting 'political' libel cases, in or out of election campaigns. Another who lost expensively, right at the end of the period, was the Labour frontbencher Michael Meacher. He failed to convince a jury in 1988 that an *Observer* article cast unfair reflections on the genuineness of his working class credentials. His legal costs were reported to be £200,000.

Typically libel cases involving politicians were about their private lives. One that attracted attention in 1957 was a *Spectator* piece which

suggested two leading Labour MPs, Nye Bevan and Richard Crossman, and the party secretary, Morgan Phillips, had got drunk at an international conference. The magazine had no hope of substantiating the claim and damages were awarded. But the case reverberated because it was quite widely believed (and rightly, it at length emerged) that the claim was true and that the three leftwingers had merely seized the opportunity to milk a Conservative publication (Crossman in particular had close connections with the rival *New Statesman*).

It was on personal grounds that former Liberal leader David Steel won a 'substantial settlement' from the *Star* in 1987, following allegations about a relationship with a woman. On the same grounds John Major became in 1993 only the fourth prime minister in the twentieth century to sue for libel while in office. (The others were Lloyd George, Churchill and Wilson.) Rumours had been circulating for two years about his relationship with a Downing Street caterer, Clare Latimer. When the *New Statesman and Society* made them explicit, quoting a tiny magazine *Scallywag*, both parties decided to sue. The matter was settled out of court six months later. Neither publication was in a strong financial position, but undertakings were given not to repeat the libels.

Libels on entertainers predictably caught the public eye. A famous case in 1958 was brought by the pianist Liberace against the *Daily Mirror* columnist 'Cassandra' (William Connor), a powerful polemicist. Liberace, more notable for his jewellery and costume than his music, claimed Connor imputed homosexuality to him. Most *Mirror* readers had probably worked this out for themselves. But at this time homosexuality was still legally as well as popularly stigmatized and Connor lost. The case cost £8,000 with £27,000 in legal costs. It was great entertainment and was widely reported in the UK and in North America.

Another category, which declined with the years but could rouse strong feelings, was the libel about someone's war record. Lord Russell of Liverpool, author of horrific accounts of Nazi and Japanese atrocities (*The Scourge of the Swastika*, and others) was an early complainant against *Private Eye*, which referred to him as Lord Liver of Cesspool and eventually had to pay up £5,000 in 1966. In 1964 the author Leon Uris was successfully sued by a retired Doctor Dering, for suggesting in his novel *Exodus* that Dering had carried out experimental sexual operations on prisoners in Auschwitz concentration camp. The doctor was vindicated: the number of operations was exaggerated. But a jury

was hardly likely to feel generous, and he was awarded half a penny in damages. David Irving, author of *The Destruction of PQ17*, another war book, describing the fate of a naval convoy to Russia, was sued in 1963 by the escort commander, Captain Broome. Broome was awarded £40,000. Even in 1989, reputation in the Second World War could bring people to court. Lord Aldington, in a long, stupendously expensive case, successfully sued the authors of a pamphlet about the treatment of captives in the Balkans in 1945.

In principle, to pursue Lord Shawcross's comment, the libel laws looked quite reasonable. Why should not the courts protect people against defamatory statements reflecting upon their character or reputation and tending to lower them in the estimation of right thinking people, or to bring them into hatred, ridicule or contempt? The decisions on the libel and on damages were made by a jury of ordinary people, not by the judge. Truth was a defence (except in the rare cases of criminal libel). 'Qualified privilege' protected media which in good faith reported libels made by many categories of other people (MPs, for example). 'Fair comment on a matter of public interest' was also a defence. The plaintiff had to prove the libel. Groups (such as 'trade union leaders' or 'Tory backbenchers') could not be libelled; nor could anyone who had consented to a publication in advance.

On the other hand, in addition to the chanciness of a libel even being spotted and pursued, the defendant had to face the possibility of an expensive defence; belief in the truth of a libel was no defence (though it might be a mitigation); the plaintiff need not prove the extent of damage or loss; and statements might be found libellous not because of their explicit meaning but for their innuendo. Innuendo, of course, was even more difficult to prove or disprove, especially if the defendant had not intended it. Finally, jury trial, for all its abstract beauty, meant that 12 people, yanked from their everyday surroundings and set to value a reputation in the isolated cell of the jury room, tended to behave unpredictably. They sometimes went wildly over the top, by everyday standards, in the financial damages awarded.

In the 1980s, the size of awards was the main matter of interest about libel. It had a knock-on effect, too, in encouraging defendants to settle out of court and on generous terms. The first earthquake case had in fact happened in 1961. Short paragraphs in the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* ('Fraud Squad Probes Firm'; 'Inquiry on Firm by City

Police') were found by a jury to carry the inference that the firm of Mr John Lewis had in fact committed fraud, whereas everyone including the newspapers acknowledged it had not. Damages totalling £217,000 (£1,800,000 in 1989 prices) were awarded. Although a new trial was ordered on appeal in 1962, on a point of law and because those damages were excessive, the case caused a judder of concern. A distinguished working party of the pressure group Justice suggested liberalizing the law and reducing the role of the jury. Papers became even more cautious than before in vetting stories before publication and settling cases out of court. Litigants more readily issued 'gagging' writs, with the effect of bottling up a paper's stories about them but often with no real intention to follow up the writ with a court action.

In the late 1960s, as a result, there were no lush libel cases – and no reform. The government did, however, set up its own inquiry under the judge Sir Neville Faulks. His committee suggested extending legal aid for libel cases and ending the jury's power to set damages. None of that was done. Publicity in the 1970s focussed more closely on issues of contempt and official secrecy.

In the 1980s cases, juries appeared to be punishing the press for its supposedly increasing prurience, intrusiveness, deviousness and willingness to fabricate news. It almost seemed as though the tabloid press viewed damages as an advertising item in the competition for sales – just another form of sensation. The entertainer Koo Stark brought eight successful actions in four years, including damages of £300,000 from the *People* in 1988 for allegations of an adulterous affair with Prince Andrew after her marriage. The writer Jeffrey Archer won £500,000 from the *Star* in 1987 for allegations that he made payments to a prostitute. Pop star Elton John agreed an out of court settlement with the *Sun* of £1 million in 1988 for unfounded allegations ('Sorry, Elton', said the *Sun*). In 1993 he was awarded £350,000 against the *Sunday Mirror* for claims about a bizarre eating disorder. *Private Eye* was hit for £600,000 in 1989 by Sonia Sutcliffe, wife of the 'Yorkshire Ripper', because of an article suggesting she sought to profit financially from his notoriety as a mass murderer. On appeal, the sum was reduced to £60,000. The soap and pop star Jason Donovan won £200,000 from *The Face* magazine in 1992 for allegations of homosexuality.

The 1980s went out with a bang when the author Count Nikolai Tolstoy (a descendant of the Russian novelist) was found guilty of

libelling a business man and former Conservative politician, Lord Aldington. Tolstoy and an associate had distributed a pamphlet – not even a publication freely on sale – to parents and others connected with Winchester College, of which Lord Aldington had been chairman of governors. It accused him in effect of being a war criminal. Despite a caution by the judge not to be too cavalier with the noughts, the jury awarded £1.5 million. Tolstoy planned to appeal, but had the funds only to conduct his appeal in person, and he was eventually refused leave.

The BBC did not escape these 'Monopoly money' awards. Esther Rantzen's popular *That's Life* series paid out a total of £1 million in 1985 for libel against an aggrieved doctor. The case was settled out of court, after six weeks during which costs piled up. Similarly *Panorama* had to pay the American drug company Upjohn £85,000 in 1994 for allegations about the drug Halcion, but costs brought the sum nearer to £1.5 million.

Contempt of court threw up a few dramatic cases – widely publicized not least because they placed judge and journalist so squarely in opposition, with a whiff of martyrdom for the journalist. In 1949 Sylvester Bolam, editor of the *Daily Mirror*, was imprisoned for three months in Brixton by Lord Chief Justice Goddard, last of the 'hanging' Judges. The paper was also fined £10,000 (worth £180,000 in 1995). Bolam had published a sensational story about 'vampire' murders in London and linked it indirectly to a man in custody, John Haigh. Haigh, known for his method of corpse disposal as 'the acid-bath murderer', was indeed found guilty. But the *Mirror* of course had jumped the gun and technically prejudiced his chances of a fair trial.

Bolam's case became notable not as an 'issue' – he admitted the error of judgement – but as showing editors were not safe through status from strict punishment. More of an issue was raised by the imprisonment of two journalists in March 1963 for contempt of court. They had refused to disclose their sources of information about an Admiralty spy, John Vassall, when requested by the tribunal inquiring into the circumstances of the spying. Civil libertarians saw this as an attack on the confidentiality essential to a free press. Others (including the judge) argued that in matters of security the government had to be the judge of the national interest, and if this required the disclosure of sources, so be it.

The contempt law was reformed in 1981. Papers continued to fall foul of it, especially as there need be no intention to interfere with the course of justice. For example, the *Mail on Sunday* was fined a total of £60,000

in 1992, as a deterrent, for disclosing how the jury reached its verdicts in one of Britain's longest and most complex fraud trials (the Blue Arrow case). The paper argued unsuccessfully that it did so as part of the public debate about whether juries should decide such complicated cases. There were no really spectacular cases, but that simply indicates the law's effectiveness in bottling up media comment. On one estimate there were at least 16 Old Bailey trials in 1982 that went entirely unreported as a result of judges applying the 1981 Act, which empowered them to prohibit reporting where this might pose a substantial risk of prejudice to the administration of justice.

The Official Secrets Act did not start seriously worrying the news media until defence policy became a more divisive subject with the decline of a cold war mentality and the growth of CND in the early 1960s. Journalists were more reluctant to keep the government's secrets and quicker to suspect the law was being used to hide political embarrassment rather than matters of genuine national interest. A series of spectacular cases, starting with the prosecution of *The Sunday Telegraph* in 1970, led to repeated backbench attempts to liberalize the Act through Private Members' Bills. The government made one attempt at reform in 1979 – but withdrew the Bill after opposition by its own supporters – and finally put a new Act on the statute book 10 years later. The 1989 Act narrowed the range of official secrecy offences and put the emphasis mainly on the prosecution to prove that unauthorized disclosures had caused harm. But critics saw the changes largely as a tidying-up job, very far from the freedom of information measures typical of the USA, Scandinavia and even of Westminster systems like Australia. A particular complaint was that the Act failed to allow defendants a 'public interest' defence.

The three problems with the old Act (mainly dating from 1911) were its breadth and unpredictability, and its inescapable political overtones (for it nearly always provoked, or was used in, a political crisis or controversy). It covered both those who published leaks and those who did the leaking. Media were thus concerned both for themselves and for their sources. In *The Sunday Telegraph* case two sources and the editor were charged. In the 'ABC' case of 1977 (about secret defence communication systems) one source and two journalists were charged. In the Sarah Tisdall case (1984), the source was charged but not the newspaper. The Ponting case (1984), though a culmination, involved a leak to an MP, and the press was not directly involved. In the Dennis case (1985),

both source (a civil servant) and newspaper (the *Guardian*) might have been prosecuted, but because of the Ponting acquittal the government decided not to proceed.

The Act's breadth came from the wording of its sections 1 and 2, which, by the use of phrases such as 'the making of any sketch, plan, model or note which could be useful to an enemy' and 'for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the state', covered virtually any information in Whitehall. Section 2 was the bugbear for journalists. Anyone who knowingly received or passed unauthorized information committed an offence. Refinements in practice included the possibility that publicly available facts, harmless individually, might comprise a 'secret' when joined together, on the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle.

Critics enjoyed quoting ridiculous examples of technically secret facts, such as the number of cups of tea drunk in Whitehall or the usage of paperclips. The serious point was that media could not always tell which articles or programmes would bring the risk of prosecution and which would not. In a system of newsgathering which relied heavily upon confidential relationships in any field and at all times – epitomized in the 'off the record' practices of the lobby correspondents – the Official Secrets Act was a concealed landmine.

The need for guidance was so obvious that a mechanism for giving it had been set up as soon as the 1911 Act was passed. This was the D notice system, a quintessential British fudge based on Old Boy attitudes. 'D' (for defence) notices were issued by a committee (which almost never met) run by a secretary, who was a retired senior services officer and known to get on with the press. The committee consisted of very senior civil servants, chaired by the head of the Ministry of Defence, and media representatives. The notices were mostly in general terms and remained in force indefinitely – perhaps a dozen or so at any one time. Media knew that if they published stories contravening them, there was a risk – not a certainty – that they would be prosecuted. If in doubt the secretary would give further advice. Indeed he could be consulted on any matter, regardless of whether there was a D notice about it. Since services personnel tend by inclination to be distasteful of party politics, the secretary avoided suspicion of confusing 'genuine' secrets with those that might simply embarrass one of the political parties.

The system worked. President Kennedy wished he had something similar to ease the management of his Cuban missile crisis in 1962. In

1967 it came under strain, and the public at large heard of its existence. The reason was, at root, that Harold Wilson, still a comparatively inexperienced prime minister, doubted the loyalty of the secretary, Colonel Sammy Lohan, whom he believed to have connived at publication by the *Daily Express* defence sleuth, Chapman Pincher, of a story about security services vetting of private international cables. To Wilson, Colonel Lohan probably did rather look like a class enemy, being a bluff, bowler-hatted type. But as the high-powered committee set up by Wilson confirmed, his loyalty was rock solid. Pincher's story, embarrassing rather than damaging, was of the 'jigsaw' type.

The D notice system survived, with minor modifications in 1982 after a parliamentary inquiry and with further revisions in 1993. It worked satisfactorily in the Falklands and Gulf wars. Its long run authority was weakened less by the Lohan incident than by the increasing tendency of respectable publications like the *Guardian* and *Sunday Times* to ignore the notices and the secretary's advice (small and radical publications were already outside the system). For example, the name of the head of M15 and the addresses of security service officers were published, on the ground that state enemies surely knew them already. Until the government itself implicitly acknowledged the force of that argument in the early 1990s, one of the D notices warned against such publication. A particular blow came late in 1987, when a Radio 4 team loyally cleared its plans for a programme about the security services with the secretary, but then found that the government obtained an injunction to ban it anyway (Welsh and Greenwood, 1992).

The *Sunday Telegraph* case in 1970 started the reform ball rolling. The case was about an official report on the Nigerian civil war, leaked by the British government 'observer', Colonel Cairns, to the *Sunday Telegraph* via the journalist (later MP) Jonathan Aitken. It was difficult to see how the British national interest was affected, especially as the war ended on the day after publication. The defendants were acquitted and a committee under Lord Franks (a non-partisan elder statesman) recommended reform. Section 2 in particular was 'a mess' and a 'catch-all provision'.

Little more than pious talk followed. The Labour party election manifesto in October 1974 pledged reform. But legislation never had a high enough priority, and there was no compelling reason why any government, possessed of the existing Act, should see advantage in weakening it – unless its own backbenchers complained. The Callaghan

government got as far as a White Paper, generally judged a victory for hardliners, before losing office in 1979. The Thatcher government's own Bill, in October 1979, self-destructed when it became clear that the exposure – endorsed by the government – of the long retired spy, Sir Anthony Blunt, would have been an offence under that Bill. In the next 10 years, Bills introduced by Conservative, Labour and Liberal/SDP backbenchers kept the issue alive. More than 100 Conservative MPs supported the Bill of their colleague Richard Shepherd in 1988, and this proved a catalyst for government action.

Meanwhile, Messrs Aubrey, Berry and Campbell were found guilty but discharged in 1978 (a moral defeat for the government) for publishing details in *Time Out* about British army signals intelligence. The Tisdall and Ponting cases followed in 1984. The bizarre *Spycatcher* saga ran from 1985 to 1988 but was an official secrets case without capital letters. That is, the Act could not be used to gag the author of those memoirs, former MI5 agent Peter Wright (writing through the pen of a ghostwriter) as he had wisely retired to Tasmania. Instead the government used injunctions, prior restraint orders, the law of contempt and the law of confidence. Attempts to quash publication overseas very largely failed, notably in the USA and Australia, and the government became a laughing stock in proportion to the sales of the book, its seepage into Britain (on sale beside the M4 near London Airport, at one stage) and the extravagance of the legal costs. In the Australian courts, gleeful pom-bashing counsel mauled one of Britain's top civil servants, the Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong. Proceedings were closely followed at home. The government, chiefly concerned to avoid Wright establishing a practice of memoir-writing that his successors might imitate, finally threw in the sponge, and *Spycatcher* became freely available after the injunctions were lifted in 1987.

The inconsistencies and unpredictability of the Official Secrets Act were shown just as clearly in these years by leaks and publications that were not prosecuted. The welfare lobbyist Frank Field, later a Labour MP, published a leaked Cabinet paper about child benefit plans in the magazine *New Society* in 1975. He was not prosecuted, despite a furore. Duncan Campbell published articles about telephone-tapping in the *New Statesman* in 1980 but received only a warning letter from the D notice secretary. Similar incidents happened in 1984. The former MI5 officer Cathy Massiter gave information on surveillance methods against CND

and certain trade unions to a TV programme called 'MI5's Official Secrets' in 1985. She repeated much of it to *The Observer* when the programme looked like being ditched. No prosecution followed. Over the years, several books of war memoirs and studies of intelligence were also published with impunity.

Even when there were prosecutions, it was difficult to know whom the net would snare. The MP Sir Hugh Fraser actually wrote to *The Times* in 1970 to ask why he was not being prosecuted with the other *Sunday Telegraph* defendants, since he was part of the chain along which the government document passed on its way to the newspaper. The answer, most probably, was his parliamentary status. For the ultimate irony (or hypocrisy) of the Act was that ministers and MPs operated a long established procedure of leaks through the lobby correspondent system, with effective legal (though not always political) impunity. As the *de facto* judges of 'the public interest' in this sphere, that was the ministers' prerogative. Their rule, in essence, was: 'I give guidance. You leak.'

The working of the 1911 Official Secrets Act had many sides that did not directly threaten the news media. These included such sensational cases as the jailing (in 1961) and story-book escape from Wormwood Scrubs (in 1966) of the Soviet spy George Blake. The government misused the D notice system to try and suppress embarrassing details of his treachery – and that of the spy at the head of the security services, Kim Philby (publicly exposed in 1967).

With all these laws – Official Secrets, libel, contempt, Obscene Publications – the general allegation was that they inhibited media. Things that did not happen are of course extremely difficult to measure and evaluate. It is tempting to blame an outside cause, too, as an excuse for laziness. For example, some journalists in the 1970s argued that the D notice system discouraged enterprize by providing an easy excuse for not chasing defence stories.

Certainly the inhibiting effect of the Official Secrets Act had declined by the 1980s, despite its continued use. In its old form, it no longer served the government's purpose of blocking leaks – though not for want of trying. Since libels, on the other hand, were mostly unintentional, and since media routinely employed lawyers to check pre-publication copy, the libel and contempt laws had an undiminished, cautionary, finger-crossing effect. The alternative was the *Private Eye* policy of high risk publication. This rested originally on the basis that sueing an improver-

ished satirical magazine would make a plaintiff look even more ridiculous than did the original libel. As the magazine prospered, that logic vanished. From the 1970s, libel costs and out of court settlements cost the magazine a fortune, though some of it was no doubt recouped in increased sales, as well as by fighting funds supported by readers.

Collective self-regulation

The courts were a fact of life. Bodies like the Press Council and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, media people probably felt, need not have been.

The attitude of the press towards the Press Council, from the start, was one of defensive resignation: it was a body to satisfy the public, not the press. The Council was set up at the suggestion of the 1947 Press Commission, but only after the threat of legislation. It began work in 1953 with vague terms of reference that suggested a mixture of trade association (dealing with recruitment), research institute (monitoring monopoly trends) and complaints tribunal. It soon became just the latter. All 25 members, including the chairman, came from the industry, so did the budget. The Council had common sense procedures (you must complain to the newspaper before complaining to the Council, for example), and it had no weapons beyond publicity and wounding criticism.

The next Press Commission tightened the screw. Grudgingly, the press accepted lay members from 1963, and a lay chairman. A succession of distinguished lawyers took the post, including Lord Devlin (a retired judge), Lord Shawcross (ex-Attorney-General and chairman of the 1961 Press Commission) and Sir Zelman Cowen (ex-Governor-General of Australia). The terms of reference focussed more sharply on complaints and the budget was pushed up. After the third Press Commission (1974), lay membership rose to 50 per cent – strictly, with the chairman, a lay majority.

Over the years, obviously, the case load rose from fewer than a dozen complaints at first, to nearly fifteen hundred in 1989. Papers generally published its adjudications against them, and it seemed to enjoy a certain respect. But it continued to lack clear authority. This was due, perhaps, to industry scepticism; lack of sanctions; lack of wide agreement on what

'the highest professional and commercial standards' ought to be; uncertainty about how far to be active, not just reactive; and the balance between individual cases and general issues.

Agreement on standards was surely a non-starter. Almost by definition, the kind of 'free press' with which such a Council could coexist involved the probability of conflicting views on the propriety of foot-in-the-door reporting, sneak photos of bikini-clad royals, and chequebook journalism. Yet to stick simply to hearing complaints about factual inaccuracy, quotations out of context or letters left unpublished by an editor, would have been to ignore issues of genuine public concern. So the Council did become increasingly active in stating views about such matters.

The Council itself was sometimes criticized not only for its decisions but for its procedures. For example, when it rebuked papers for publishing the four-letter words used in the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* trial in 1960 the editors involved complained that they had not first been given a chance to justify themselves.

One school, including Lord Shawcross, thought the Council's procedures should be very informal, for the sake of speed and simplicity, and that its principles should evolve through the accumulation of case law. Others thought there should be a tightly drawn code of practice. This would certainly have been necessary if sanctions were introduced, such as the fines and suspensions which were suggested to the 1974 Press Commission.

By the end of the 1980s, a head of steam about these matters had built up in parliament, the broadsheet press and sections of the public. It continued to his in opposing directions. Many parliamentarians fancied privacy and right of reply legislation, with a statutory press council wielding legal sanctions. Broadsheet journalists paled at that prospect – and stoked up the argument for continued self-regulation. London editors agreed some rules of good practice and appointed a variety of individual ombudsmen to apply them. In 1990 a government committee chaired by David Calcutt QC (later head of a Cambridge college) recommended replacing the Press Council with a Press Complaints Commission and giving it eighteen months to show that voluntary self-regulation could work.

With minds thus concentrated, the press moved quickly to set up the new body, financing it by an industry levy. Among the sixteen members,

press representatives were a minority. A 16-clause code of practice (later expanded to 18) was thrashed out, covering principles and practices from rights of reply to the treatment of children in sex cases. The main work of the commission remained adjudicating complaints not resolved with the publication concerned. In the first two years there were 244 of these, of which 104 were upheld. A further 806 were resolved at editorial level. Seventy per cent of complaints were about inaccuracy. Compared with its predecessor the commission also raised its profile, by organizing meetings, setting up a helpline for advice on dealing with the press – and considering issues affecting the public interest, even if they had not been raised by someone directly affected.

Critical to the reception of these reforms was press treatment of the marital problems of the royal family. The key episodes were the publication of affectionate private phone conversations between Princess Diana and an unidentified friend (the 'Squidgy' tape, recorded in 1990); twenty pages of pictures in the *Daily Mirror* of the Duchess of York, poolside in St Tropez with an American financial adviser (the 'toe-sucking' episode) in August 1992; the serialization by the *Sunday Times* in the same period of *Diana: her True Story*, a best-seller by Andrew Morton revealing the strains in her marriage (some four months before the formal separation); publication in January 1993, again in Mirror group papers, of bugged pillowtalk phone calls between Prince Charles and Mrs Camilla Parker-Bowles (the 'Camillagate' tape); and the publication in November the same year – also by the *Daily Mirror* – of photographs, taken by a concealed camera, of a leotard-clad Princess Diana working out in a Chelsea gym. The *Sun*, meanwhile, paid the Queen £200,000 for breach of copyright by printing her 1992 Christmas Day message on 23rd December.

Public sympathy for these invasions of privacy probably fuelled the move for legal action. Sir David Calcutt reported a second time in January 1993. Now he had no hesitation in proposing a statutory press tribunal with power to order apologies, initiate inquries without prior complaint, ban publication of items in advance – and to impose fines of up to one per cent of a publication's annual revenue. His privacy law would make it a criminal offence to be on private property without consent and with intent to obtain information for publication; and to bug, photograph or record people on private property. Fines of up to £5,000 could be imposed, but there would be a public interest defence.

The Commons National Heritage select committee recommended comparable initiatives in March the same year. In France, where such laws already existed, the Duchess of York had been able to get £60,000 damages from the magazine *Paris Match* for its publication of the St. Tropez pictures.

Public sympathy may have become somewhat cooler during this sequence of exposures, however, by a growing awareness that the royal family, with princely marriages in tatters, seemed themselves to be using different parts of the media to advance their own versions of events. Lord McGregor, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, felt especially aggrieved, having launched a powerful attack on the press for 'dabbling in the stuff of people's souls' in the *Diana: her True Story* episode. He now felt the Commission had been misled, since the princess appeared to have been a collaborator.

This shift away from the fairy-tale approach to the monarchy, which characterized almost all the press ever since the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936, was reinforced by unflattering stories about royal wealth and extravagance. At the same time, ministers and parliamentarians were suffering exposure for 'sleaze', both in personal and financial matters (as described earlier). In this climate, it was not surprising that the Major administration was extremely cautious about implementing the Calcutt proposals. Lord McGregor was succeeded in January 1995 by Lord Wakeham, a veteran Consrvative heavyweight. For the time being, self-regulation survived.

Privacy legislation would be likely to affect the broadcasters too, but they were not perceived directly as part of the problem, and the compaints bodies remained low key. The BBC set up a three-person Commission in 1972, headed by a former ombudsman (Britain's first), Sir Edmund Compton, but staffed, appointed and paid for by the BBC itself. The comparable IBA Complaints Review Board did not even have outside members. After scathing criticism by the Annan Committee, a single Broadcasting Complaints Commission with an independent chairman was established by the 1981 Broadcasting Act, to hear complaints about 'unjust or unfair treatment' and invasions of privacy. Results were published in the *Radio Times* or *TV Times* and on the same channel and at a similar time as the item of complaint. The workload was greatly limited by the terms of reference excluding most of the things subject to everyday grumbles: sex, violence, bad language, bad taste and inconveni-

ent scheduling. Thus in 1993, for example, the Commission had only 115 complaints within its jurisdiction. Subjects ranged, the annual report said chirpily, 'from tooth-whitener, breast implants and battery hens, to joy-riding, Satanic ritual abuse and food safety'. More than half were about features and documentaries; less than one-quarter about news. The majority, proportionate to its size, were about Channel 4.

Sex and violence, as we have seen, were for the new Broadcasting Standards Council. This received complaints at a much higher rate – 1192, or ten times as many as the BCC, in the year to March 1993. Half were about taste and decency (such as bad language or the treatment of disasters), with sex attracting somewhat more than violence. The Council also conducted research on contents and audience attitudes. The existence of Commission and Council alongside one another looked increasingly illogical, and the 1994 Broadcasting white paper announced that they would be amalgamated.

Compared with both the Press Council and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, the Advertising Standards Authority was impressive because in practice it had effective sanctions. It started in 1962, in an attempt to make advertisements (except those on ITV, which the IBA controlled) 'legal, decent, honest and truthful'. Like the other bodies, it was goaded by the threat of legislation. After 1974, with an independent chairman, a mixed lay/industry membership and a budget provided by a 0.1 per cent levy on display advertising, it was able to enforce its code of practice through an agreement by the press not to publish ads that it had banned. It had a much higher public profile than other bodies, monitored thousands of ads per year and received over 8,000 complaints in 1987–8. But the crucial press agreement and code of practice had no exact comparison with what could be expected of the non-advertising contents of the press.

For the *news* media, then, the semi-independent bodies seemed at best capable of helping individual citizens enforce accountability. They were little help in producing a more general accountability to the public.

Arguments for 'independence'

Media really just wanted to be left alone. The press in particular had a wide range of time-tested arguments to justify resisting unwanted

interference by outsiders. Most simple was accountability to the market place: 'If you do not like what is in my paper, read another or found your own'. By 1945 this should have been long discredited. In the early 1900s it had had some plausibility. Not everyone with something worth saying (especially if radical) could even then find an outlet. But relatively well to do groups and individuals, usually with political aims, could afford to launch a paper and keep it going even at a loss without ruination.

In the first half of the century, however, the laws of market economics themselves destroyed the force of the argument. As we have seen, regional papers were linked in chains to each other and to the nationals; the nationals became dominant in circulation; the minimum viable economic size of a paper increased and the weakest were driven out of business. Already when Colonel Astor rehearsed the argument to the 1947 Press Commission, in justification of his ownership of *The Times*, the 'free market' claim was rusty. It had seized up so completely by the mid-1970s that the third Royal Commission proposed a public subsidy to keep existing national dailies afloat, never mind the question of starting up new ones. That was beyond the pocket even of the super-rich until Shah and Murdoch broke the power of the unions in the 1980s.

The 1947 Press Commission endorsed 'market accountability' not because it naively believed free entry was realistic but because it thought the existing range of papers covered enough points of view to meet the conditions of an informed democracy, and because intervention in the market would have been a cure worse than the disease. The Commission's arguments became the classic post-war statement bolstering the historic claim that a free press was a press free from government – regardless (implicitly) of the social and financial powers that might curb it. The two later Commissions shifted the emphasis but did not challenge the argument's essentials.

Part of the plausibility of the Press Commission view came from the traditional links between the press and the party system. The Commission thought 'all important points of view' should have an outlet. Most of the important issues and interests in society, the argument went, were represented in the various political parties. There is a natural affinity, as chapter 8 suggested, between parties and papers: a paper is a focus of activity and a means of building membership. Parties are as strong as their support, and a loyal party paper is therefore popularly

accountable. Bias does not matter, provided that readers are aware of it and that rival papers exist in support of other parties. As the 1925 *Labour Year Book* put it, 'the falsehoods and mis-representation of one party [are] promptly exposed and refuted in the national organs of the other'.

The 1947 Press Commission defence of 'market accountability' thus rested (implicitly, in fact) on an assumption that the post-war press and party system would continue roughly to parallel each other. This did not really happen, as we have seen. Papers became notoriously unreliable, from the viewpoint of leaders and party professionals who were involved in day to day policy and tactics. Party loyalty was always liable to clash with the rival journalistic belief in the importance of independence from government.

The idea of press accountability through links with the party system really belonged to an age when readers did not look to their papers chiefly for relaxation and entertainment. As the 'seriousness' of a broadsheet format gave way to tabloid values, and as TV expanded, the papers most people read stopped covering party politics like their predecessors – even though they continued to have strong political views.

While the *Daily Mirror* was steadily loyal to the Labour party leadership in the 1940s and 1950s and dealt with politics in a serious way, it could equally have justified itself not by 'party accountability' but by a populist appeal: 'We just give our readers what they want'. This was the natural defence of a mass circulation tabloid, whose values stressed entertainment and relaxation, with neither scope nor space for political detail and abstractions. It might be called the 'Page Three' theory of accountability. Although it dated back at least as far as Northcliffe, who used movements in his papers' circulation figures to justify shifts in the editorial line, its post-war use was most effectively signalled by the arrival of the Murdoch *Sun* in 1970, with its daily bare-breasted girl on page three. This was the newspaper as follower not leader: if people did not like nudes on page three, circulation would drop and they would be replaced. Within much broader limits than on the broadsheet papers, quantitative not qualitative judgements ruled (is it good for sales, never mind about souls?). Where the inter-war barons and the party papers aimed to carry their readers with them, while telling them what they 'ought to know', the populist tabloid was driven by market research and readers' known preferences, and was in this sense genuinely 'the voice of its readers'.

The populist argument had the uncomplicated appeal of boiled sweets. To some extent, it was true by definition that the larger was the circulation of the paper, the more it necessarily reflected the likes of the mass of its readers. The success of the 'soaraway' *Sun* in the 1970s and 1980s was difficult to argue with. The problem about it as a form of accountability was that of the excluded alternative. Notwithstanding readership research, how could one be sure people would not have preferred a more serious tabloid if it could compete on equal terms (rather than start from scratch), or if one grew up expecting something less frivolous in a newspaper? Maybe (though is it likely?) the *Sun* 'soared away' *despite* the nudes on page three, not because of them. The complaint, particularly from the left, was as old as popular journalism. The *Sun*, and to a less degree the *Mirror* before it, could be seen either as an enlivener of dull lives or, in the phrase radical critics used against Northcliffe, as 'polluting the pure river of enlightenment'.

The pure river of enlightenment was certainly fed by the springs of *The Times* – in the view of *Times* people, anyway, and of that part of the nation's elite known in the 1950s and 1960s as 'the establishment' (a usage coined, in fact, by a *Times* man). If Colonel Astor offered the accountability of the market place in 1947, his staff would surely have supplemented it by a justification summed up in the notion of independence – the word chosen in 1986 for a new daily based substantially on the old *Times* idea (and drawing many of its older readers and some of its staff).

The Times, perhaps *The Observer*, and later the *Independent*, appealed for the reader's trust on the basis of a comprehensive disinterest or detachment. 'Independence' was indeed the key – from government, parties, pressure groups, advertisers, financial interests, profit margins. Even the cult of personality was avoided, by keeping the entire contents anonymous: only in 1967 were bylines introduced. (The one previous exception – and conceit – was 'Oliver Edwards', the pseudonym of Sir William Haley, the editor till that year, who wrote a weekly books column.) Freed from such constraints like no other institution (except perhaps a university), a paper could report and judge events supremely on their merits. *The Times* in the mid-nineteenth century had seen itself virtually as an estate of the realm. Northcliffe, who bought it in 1908, thought seriously of bequeathing it to the British Museum, not for embalming with the mummies but to secure its independence. In

precisely that spirit it was bought by Colonel Astor on Northcliffe's death in 1922, specifically to secure it from party politicians such as Lloyd George.

Throughout the Astor ownership and that of the Thomsons from 1967 to 1981, *The Times* continued to claim a special kind of independence. It was institutionalized in the presence on the board of a handful of 'national' directors, such as the Governor of the Bank of England and the President of the Royal Society, as a protection against malign influences. Under Murdoch the arrangement continued; but it looked a sham, for it did not prevent him sacking the editor, Harold Evans, in an interventionist and most un-Astor/Thomson-like way. The last of the old, independent editors was thus William Rees-Mogg, in the chair for most of the Thomson years. The experience qualified him perfectly for chairmanship of the Thatcher government's Broadcasting Standards Council in 1989, which (on a generous interpretation) was intended to epitomize comparable 'independence'.

The Times' independence, it should be emphasized, did not mean sitting on the fence or expressing 'all points of view'. Rather, it was a matter of the procedures by which a view was reached. The unique quality of these was supposedly that unlike even a statesman, who had to take account of public opinion and electoral calculation, the paper could judge dispassionately by a process of reasoned argument based on clear principles and accurate information. If its conclusions did coincide with a government's, that would be entirely fortuitous. The idea was summed up in *The Times*' letters column. This was a nationally unique forum, in which people whose worlds might otherwise never collide could hammer away at an issue. It was class-based, of course. But it was capable of wider resonance, since other papers from time to time quoted it or followed up letters as news items; and the voice of working class representatives, such as trade union leaders, was frequently heard, if not working class tones themselves.

In the years after 1945 two experiences gave force to *The Times*' claim to independence. One was the paper's beetroot embarrassment and guilt at having been so utterly wrong about the best way to handle Hitler and Mussolini in the 1930s. Its campaign for a policy of appeasement, it now conceded, was the result of the editor Geoffrey Dawson getting too close to ministers and playing the statesman instead of the detached observer. The second experience was the paper's startling enthusiasm – startling

because it had seemed previously so conservative if not Conservative – for the welfare radicalism of the Attlee government. In the mid-1940s, under the guidance of historian-turned-leaderwriter E. H. Carr, *The Times* was politically pink.

The theoretical problem with this idea of 'independence' was that the paper's basic values obviously had to come from somewhere: in that sense it had a bias no less than any other paper. In practice this was 'constitutionalist', a concern primarily that things were done in the right way – whether in social policy, international relations, standards of public life or on the football pitch – and only secondarily with what actually was decided. The paper prided itself on being a 'journal of record', carrying detailed law reports, parliamentary coverage and various official announcements that were not easily justifiable by ordinary news values but that recognized the importance of the institutions concerned to the social order. Among these, naturally, was the monarchy. *The Times* published the daily Court Circular on its Court Page, and until well after the war a few copies of the paper were printed at the end of each daily run as a 'Royal Edition' on special high quality paper.

A second problem about 'independence' was that, if it was to be taken on trust, it had, like justice, to be seen to be believed. For how else could readers know it existed? Under the Astors, this was no problem, partly because no financial crisis raised the issue of profit versus journalistic values until the 1960s. But in the Thomson and Murdoch ownerships, *The Times* passed to multinational conglomerates, and Thomson had major holdings, for example, in North Sea oil. Anyone wishing to impugn the integrity of the paper could claim it was in the grip of sectional interests. *The Sunday Times*, moreover, had become a crusading specialist in exposure journalism under Thomson's ownership. What chance of an exposé of oil company profiteering? Perhaps there was no profiteering, but how were readers to know what subtle pressures might gag the editor? Alternatively. the pressures might plug a particular tune. Under Murdoch ownership, *The Times* did not escape the charge that Murdoch publications were actively plugging Murdoch's Sky satellite TV channels.

Times-style 'independence', like party ownership of papers, belonged to an earlier age of smaller, self-contained organizations. Its logic remained intact, and new life was indeed breathed into it by the *Independent*. But it was necessarily precarious in practice, for it depended

on financial security, and when the *Independent*, which lacked the backing of a conglomerate, found itself unprofitable in the early 1990s, how long would its independence last, especially after control passed to the Mirror group? *The Observer*, similarly independent, lost credibility after it passed to Lonrho in 1981. The *Guardian* remained free of a conglomerate, but it was fortunate to survive the hard economic times of the 1970s at all. Besides, it did not take quite the same view of 'independence', being committed to a policy of radicalism by the terms of the trust that controlled it.

Papers that wished to show they were not the tool of conglomerate owners adopted in the 1960s and 1970s a notion of accountability that combined opening their columns to a variety of discordant opinions (made easier by the decline of anonymous journalism) with an editorial stance of scepticism or hostility towards powerful interests. This was the heyday of 'adversary journalism'. It chimed with (perhaps contributed to?) the anti-authoritarianism of the late 1960s, and it reached its international peak in the destruction of the corrupt American President Nixon by the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. In Britain, it was led by *The Sunday Times*, under the editorship of Harold Evans, with its remorseless 'Insight' team, exposing the wicked and incompetent.

Adversary journalism invited people to believe that if a paper was against the big and powerful, it must be *for* the readers. It was an extension of the 'fourth estate' tradition. But it had two flaws. It was open first, to the challenge. 'We know what you are *against*, but what are you in favour of?' The answer, for *The Sunday Times*, seemed to be a mixture of *Times*-style rationalism and a residual Tory partisanship left over from its Kemsley ownership. The second flaw, the distinctive vice of adversary journalism, was more subtle. It consisted in a confusion of the newspaper with the news. Time and again, what started as a *Sunday Times* campaign – whether about thalidomide or about excessive government secrecy stifling publication of an ex-cabinet minister's diaries – ended with the role of the paper itself as the news. Should the paper be allowed to publish an article critical of the drug company? Should it defy a government ban on the Crossman diaries? This confusion might not matter much. News anyway has traditionally included not only 'the story' but an element of 'how we got the story'. But in the context of accountability, the confusion suggests that if a paper justifies its role too prominently by reference to what it dislikes, it risks lack of proportion

in its reaction to events, for its own involvement becomes a major criterion of their importance. It risks becoming hound not guard dog, bully not champion.

All those arguments trying to justify non-interference in the press by outsiders rested ultimately on the assumption that there was for the reader somewhere else to go. The listener and viewer, however, had initially no such choice. For that very reason, of course, the thread of broadcast accountability was spun strong. Broadcasters were held formally accountable to Parliament through the intermediary body of one, later two, public corporations.

For day-to-day practice – whether a programme really did 'inform, educate or entertain' – those threads were gossamer thin. Only in the rare event of a massive row (someone drunk on air, frightful language or violence; a claim of political bias) did they prove strong. Even then, they could only bind for the future, since the rows almost always came *after* a broadcast, not before.

On a day-to-day basis the broadcasters gradually adopted the same range of self-justifications as the press. Thus 'entertainment' – the showbiz element of programming – appealed to the populist claim to give the viewers what they wanted. This created the massive audiences for soap operas, quizzes and chat shows, and it effectively reversed the old order of priority by putting entertainment first. For the BBC, the need to give higher recognition to this argument was one of the hard consequences of competition after the introduction of ITV and ILR.

Phone-in, talk-back and 'open door' or access programmes, all of which became commonplace after shaky and self-conscious starts in the early 1970s, represented the closest the broadcasting duopoly could get to the 'free entry' ideal theoretically available in the unlimited market of print. Party politics were treated scrupulously on the basis of 'paralleling' the parliamentary party system, with disputes limited mainly to the conditions of access for minor parties. Current affairs and documentaries trod a precarious line between party balance, 'adversary journalism' and claims to independence of judgement comparable to the old *Times* idea. BBC news used to be the quintessence of 'independence'. As we saw, the very introduction of TV news was opposed by traditionalists fearing picture value might adulterate correct news values. 'Constitutionalist' elements were represented in the reverential approach to broadcasting about royalty (by no means discarded with the exposure of royal feet of

clay), in the privileged position given to the legally established religion of Protestantism compared with alternatives, and in the daily report of parliamentary proceedings, which was edited less by news values than by reference to Parliament's own objectives.

In general, broadcast programme categories and production groups did not overlap, so the danger that these different forms of accountability would clash was slight. But occasionally they did, in plays, for example. Drama production was involved in a perennial tension between the familiar or popular and the innovative. From the mid-1960s onwards the political play was a type that politicians periodically treated as appropriate to political accountability rules not 'entertainment' rules. The broadcasters, however, kept their customary rules of balance in mind when planning plays and usually resisted pressure.

The distinctive problem of accountability for the broadcasters by the 1990s was that the number and diversity of radio and TV channels, hours of programming, production organizations and methods of finance meant that the simple principles reffected through the public corporation model were increasingly inadequate. Yet the system remained a *regulated* market, with the result that the varied rhetoric of accountability developed for the press fitted broadcasting even less convincingly than it fitted newspapers. The Thatcher government's response was to set up the Broadcasting Standards Council as an instrument of programme accountability, while making broadcasting structures as much of a 'free' market as possible through such devices as guaranteed access for independent production companies and through auctioning whole ITV franchises.

Broadcasters were predisposed against the Standards Council partly because their internal machinery of accountability was elaborate and well established. In the BBC this included a large General Advisory Council, regional Councils and specialist advisory bodies for subjects such as religion, education and agriculture. All these were a supplement to, and originally a substitute for, detailed audience research. ITV had a similar structure, with the additional dimension of advice about the contents of advertisements. Backing these up were the broadcasters' codes of practice – symbols, again, of good faith and self-discipline. From 1964, for example, ITV operated a code on violence in TV programmes ('ingenious and unfamiliar methods of inflicting pain and injury – particularly if capable of easy imitation – should not be shown without the most careful consideration', and so on).

Press and broadcasters, then, relied eventually on very similar arguments to persuade the public, the politicians and the increasing number of interested pressure groups, that it was ultimately in everybody's interest for media to be accountable in general to some combination of their consciences and the market place. On the whole, they got away with it – even if that did not necessarily mean they carried conviction. But how long into the future would they continue to do so?

11 Conclusion

When people ask about the effects of media, chapter 1 suggested, they generally turn out to be interested in something else, of which media might be a cause, such as violence or political bias. A history of media could easily slip into being a history of society as a whole. This in itself reflects the centrality of media in our lives.

For the same reason, questions about the effect of media upon individual people often get unsatisfactory answers. Until you know why the questioners are asking – the question behind the question – you cannot be sure what to say. Are they interested in *intentional* influence or *unintentional*? *Short-run* influence (however defined), or *long run*? Influence over a person's *knowledge, attitudes, beliefs*? Or over the person's subsequent *behaviour* (many people are persuaded that tobacco and alcohol are bad for them, but they go on smoking and drinking, even so)?

A question about media and violence or pornography, then, would get a rather different answer according to which of those other questions someone was interested in. At the extremes, the general answers about media influence over individuals are a safe bet. People in 1945–95 were not the puppets of the media barons, jerking at every tug of the string. Nor, equally, can we seriously believe that popular attitudes were entirely unmoved by the media. The problem is to know where inbetween, in particular cases, the balance of influence and autonomy lay.

If we were to pursue the issue further, it would be most clearly done through a series of categories and distinctions. From previous chapters, it is clear that media had influence in some measure over elite individuals and groups. Media created and destroyed reputations – sometimes conclusively in politics, as with the scandals surrounding the Conservative minister John Profumo (1963) and the Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe

(1970s). Pop stars, as a class, were the creation of media. Media transformed the economics of sporting stardom, from football to snooker and darts. Formerly amateurs or poorly paid, the best performers advanced to superstar wealth. The royal family acquired a more complex and latterly destructive kind of superstardom (and without any direct increase in personal wealth).

Another category of speculation could be media's effects upon the distinctiveness of regional and social class cultures. An early landmark in the period was Richard Hoggart's discussion of working class culture in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), but the subject was part of a wider and continual sociological preoccupation with class in post-war Britain. A third category might be the effects of media upon political and social institutions of all kinds – schools, trade unions, the police and armed services, scientific and medical research laboratories, in addition to the institutions of Parliament and political parties discussed in chapter 8. Fourth might be our perceptions of the outside world. What did TV contribute to our grasp of the reality and moral issues of war, famine, race?

The triteness of such paragraphs illustrates again the difficulty of talking about media effects at large. Hence, too, the recurrent theme in this book of *accountability*. Assume that media *were* a major influence in 1945–95. We have analysed the arguments they used to justify self-regulation and the accountability of the market place, and have seen that their claims became increasingly rickety. Conglomeration, concentration and internationalization made them even worse. The post-war decades contributed no new solutions, beyond complaints machinery and the powers of the IBA/ITC and the monopoly laws (weak in practice) to limit cross-ownership and press concentration.

The case for accountability must not be taken for granted. Lists and tables showing concentration and conglomeration are not in themselves an argument. If three or four large newspaper groups were not enough for popular accountability in 1945–95 what number would have been? What difference did it make, that the dominant groups changed periodically? Would lots of smaller groups necessarily have reflected and encouraged the variety of our culture more successfully? If governments had interfered with the media market more actively, what would that have implied for the accountability of governments themselves?

This last question is the critical one for the second half of the twentieth century. No one argued a successful case that the need to hold

an increasingly integrated media industry accountable to the public through the government was greater than the need to hold the government accountable through the media. But in practice, one did not have to be a cynic to argue that by 1995 Britain had reached the worst of both worlds: audiences who were not very interested in media that spent time and money on holding governments accountable; and governments that sought to manipulate the media but not to limit the excesses of concentration and cross-ownership.

Perhaps in the late 1990s that might change, if true. If the ideas and arguments were not new, the media system to which they would henceforth be applied was certainly changing dramatically. It may be that media are always changing dramatically and that yesterday's revolution seems a hiccup beside the coming belch. But electronic glut, via the Internet, cable or digital TV, might finally destroy what for so long kept the public management of press and broadcasting apart: the lack of a broadcasting 'free market'.

But telling the future is no more reliable with media than with anything else. In 1913 the anonymous author of *Bohemian Days In Fleet Street* peered ahead to 1960. He visualized a suburban Mr Jones coming down to breakfast keen for news (including, presciently, of the reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth). Beside his plate is a 'receiver and communicator' which 'sucks in from the ambient air the news sent circulating from the central depot'. Jones selects the subjects 'by a curious arrangement of "stops". There is the "City" stop, the "Parliamentary" stop, the "Courts" stop, the "Racing" stop . . . Thus the news is gently murmured to Jones as he eats his ham and eggs.' The only thing seriously wrong with this fancy is what happens after breakfast. Instead of driving off to work by car, Jones unhitches his aeroplane from the aero-railings.

Appendix: Provincial Evening Papers

Listed by town, name of paper, owner and circulation (thousands) in 1945 (or at start) and owner and circulation (thousands) in 1994 (or at closure).

Papers existing in 1945

England

Barrow, *Evening Mail*; Westminster (19); CN Group (22)
Bath, *Evening Chronicle*; Wessex (15); Westminster (21)
Birmingham, *Evening Despatch*; Westminster (138); closed, 1963
Birmingham, *Evening Mail*, Iliffe (200); Midland Independent (200)
Blackburn, *Evening Telegraph*; Kemsley (70); Reed (48)
Blackpool, *Evening Gazette*; Grimes (40); United (45)
Bolton, *Evening News*; Tillotson (65); Reed (46)
Bournemouth, *Evening Echo*; Southern (45); same (50)
Bradford, *Telegraph and Argus*; Westminster (103); same (63)
Brighton, *Evening Argus*; Southern Publishing (42); Westminster (68)
Bristol, *Evening Post*; BEP/Associated (109); BEP (93)
Bristol, *Evening World*; BEP/Associated (60); closed, 1962
Burton, *Daily Mail*; BDM (18), Yattendon (Iliffe) (21)
Cambridge, *Evening News*; Taylor (17); Yattendon (Iliffe) (43)
Carlisle, *Evening News*; Carlisle Conservative News-papers (12); CN Group (28)
Cheltenham, *Gloucestershire Echo*; Associated (18); same (28)
Coventry, *Evening Telegraph*; Iliffe (50); Midland Independent (85)
Darlington, *Evening Dispatch*; Westminster (13); closed, 1986

Derby, *Evening Telegraph*; Associated (46); same (67)
Exeter, *Express and Echo*; Harmsworth (30); Associated (32)
Gloucester, *Citizen*; Associated (19); same (39)
Grimsby, *Evening Telegraph*; Associated (25); same (49)
Halifax, *Evening Courier*, Halifax Courier (33); same (33)
Hartlepool, *Mail*; Portsmouth and Sunderland (24); same (27)
Huddersfield, *Daily Examiner*; Woodhead (27); same (39)
Hull, *Daily Mail*; Associated (95); same (94)
Ipswich, *Evening Star*, E. Anglian D. Times (Colman) (30); E. Counties (Colman) (30)
Kettering, *Evening Telegraph*; East Midlands Allied Press (26); same (37)
Leeds, *Yorkshire Evening News*; United (122); closed, 1963
Leeds, *Yorkshire Evening Post*; Yorkshire Conservative Newspapers (204); United (114)
Leicester, *Evening Mail*; Hewitt/Associated (40); closed, 1962
Leicester, *Evening Mercury*; Hewitt/Associated (100); Associated (122)
Lincoln, *Echo*; Daily Mirror (20); Associated (32)
Liverpool, *Echo*; Liverpool Daily Post (284); Trinity International (173)
Liverpool, *Evening Express*; Liverpool D. Post (89); closed, 1958
Manchester, *Evening Chronicle*; Kemsley (224); closed, 1963
Manchester, *Evening News*; Guardian and Manchester Evening News (Scott) (250); same (214)
Middlesbrough, *Evening Gazette*; Kemsley (69); Thomson (70)
Newcastle, *Evening Chronicle*; Kemsley (190); Thomson (121)
Northampton, *Chronicle and Echo*; United (37); EMAP (31)
Norwich, *Eastern Evening News*; Norfolk News (Colman) (38); E. Counties (Colman) (43)
Nottingham, *Evening News*; Westminster (47); closed, 1963
Nottingham, *Evening Post*; T. Bailey Forman (90); Associated (113)
Nuneaton, *Evening Tribune*; Leamington Spa Courier (25); EMAP (13)
Oldham, *Evening Chronicle*; Hirst, Kidd and Rennie (25); same (37)
Oxford, *Mail*; Westminster (25); same (37)
Plymouth, *Western Evening Herald*; Harmsworth (62); Associated (58)
Portsmouth, *Evening News*; Portsmouth and Sunderland (81); same (80)
Preston, *Evening Post*; United (88); same (68)
Scarborough, *Evening News*; Whittaker (8); EMAP (17)
Sheffield, *Star*, Kemsley (156); United (105)
Shields (North), *Evening News*; Westminster (11); closed, 1959
Shields (South), *Gazette*; Westminster (24); North East Press (26)
Southampton, *Southern Daily Echo (Evening Echo)*; Southern (60); same (64)
Stoke-on-Trent, *Evening Sentinel*; Associated (72); same (99)

Sunderland, *Echo*; Portsmouth and Sunderland (57); same (62)
Swindon, *Evening Advertiser*, Westminster (22); same (29)
Torquay, *Herald Express*; Harmsworth (18); Associated (31)
Weymouth, *Evening Echo*; Southern (20); same (22)
Wolverhampton, *Express and Star*, Graham (149); Claverley (217)
Worcester, *Evening News*; Berrows (30); Reed (24)
York, *Evening Press*; Kemsley (44); Westminster (50)

Wales

Cardiff, *South Wales Echo*; Kemsley (132); Thomson (82)
Newport, *South Wales Argus*; Thomas (32); United (38)
Swansea, *South Wales Evening Post*; Associated (47); same (70)

Scotland

Aberdeen, *Evening Express*; Kemsley (67); Thomson (70)
Dundee, *Evening Telegraph and Post*; D.C. Thomson (48); same (39)
Edinburgh, *Evening News*; United (129); Thomson (92)
Edinburgh, *Evening Dispatch*; Findlay; closed 1963
Glasgow, *Evening Citizen*; Beaverbrook (144); closed, 1973
Glasgow, *Evening News*; Kemsley (99); closed, 1955
Glasgow, *Evening Times*; Outram (293); Caledonian (148)
Greenock, *Telegraph*; Orr (24); Clyde and Forth (21)

Northern Ireland

Belfast, *Telegraph*; Baird (120); Thomson (134)

Papers founded after 1945

Burnley, *Evening Star*; Thomson, 1965; closed 1983
Chatham, *Evening Mail*; launched and closed, 1969
Chatham, *Evening Post*; Kent Messenger, 1969; closed, 1990
Chelmsford, *Evening Herald*; launched 1980, closed 1982
Colchester, *Evening Gazette*; Essex County Newspapers, 1970; Reed (29)

Doncaster, *Evening Post*; United, 1966; closed, 1983
Guildford, *Surrey Daily Advertiser*; launched 1974, closed 1980
Hereford, *Evening News*; News of the World, 1959; closed, 1967
Luton, *Evening Post*; Thomson, 1967; amalgamated Hemel Hempstead *Post and Echo*, 1975; closed 1983
Maidstone, *Kent Today*; Kent Messenger, 1990; same (30)
Peterborough, *Evening Telegraph*; EMAP, 1960; same (29)
Reading, *Evening Post*; Thomson, 1965; Guardian Media Group (25)
Scanthrope, *Evening Telegraph*; Associated (date?); (25)
Slough, *Evening Mail*; Thomson, 1969; closed, 1982
Southend, *Evening Echo*; Westminster, 1969; same (55)
Telford, *Shropshire Star*, Midland News; Claverley (97)
Watford, *Evening Echo*; Thomson, 1967; amalgamated Hemel Hempstead *Post and Echo* 1975; closed 1983
Wrexham, *Evening Leader*; N. Wales Newspapers, 1973; same (33)

Note: This list excludes some 'series titles' (such as in Birmingham Evening Mail group) and some new titles later amalgamated.
Sources: Camrose (1947); Press Council; Royal Commissions on the Press.

Outline Chronology

1946 TV service resumes, 7 June.
1947 Royal Commission on the Press (reports 1949).
1948 First TV newsreel (silent), 5 January.
1949 Beveridge Committee on Broadcasting (reports 1951).
1950 First TV coverage of general election results.
1953 Press Council set up.
Coronation televised.
First edition of *Panorama*, 11 November.
1954 Television Act establishes ITV (starts, 1955).
TV licences growing at 800,000 per annum.
1955 Wartime newsprint controls end.
1956 Eden makes first televised ministerial broadcast, 27 April.
1957 Queen's Christmas message broadcast on TV.
1958 TV advertising passes national press advertising.
1959 First TV general election campaign coverage.
The *Guardian* drops 'Manchester', prints in London.
1960 *News Chronicle* and London Evening *Star* close.
Pilkington Committee on broadcasting (reports 1962).
1961 Royal Commission on the Press (reports 1962).
Sunday Times colour magazine starts.
1963 Lay members join Press Council.
1964 BBC 2 starts, 20 April.
Pirate radio starts (Radio Caroline).
1965 Cigarette advertising banned from TV.
1966 *The Times* puts news on front page.
1967 BBC2 starts regular colour.
Pirate radio banned; Radio 1 starts.
BBC local radio starts.
ITV re-franchises and shake-up.

1969 BBC1 and ITV start regular colour.
Murdoch buys *Sun* and launches it as tabloid.
1971 Independent Local Radio authorized (starts in 1973).
1974 Annan Committee on broadcasting (reports 1977).
Royal Commission on the Press (reports 1977).
First election radio phone-ins.
1975 House of Commons trial radio broadcasts (regular from 1976).
1978 *The Times* and *Sunday Times* suspend publication in industrial dispute, November (till November 1979).
1980 London *Evening News* and *Evening Standard* merge.
1981 Murdoch completes purchase of *Times* newspapers.
1982 ITV re-franchises.
Channel 4 starts.
Hunt Report signals cable expansion.
1983 Breakfast time TV (BBC and ITV).
1984 Maxwell buys *Mirror* newspapers.
1985 Peacock Committee on BBC finance (reports 1986).
1986 Murdoch moves *The Times* to Wapping, January.
Today and *Independent* launched.
1989 Official Secrets Act reformed.
Regular House of Commons TV starts.
Sky satellite TV service launched.
1990 Broadcasting Act reforms ITV.
Sky and BSB merge to form BSkyB.
1991 Press Complaints Commission replaces Press Council.
Robert Maxwell drowns.
1992 Classic FM starts.
Punch closes.
Calcutt committee recommends privacy measures.
BBC and Government publish discussion papers on BBC future.
1993 New ITV franchises go on air.
Observer sold to *Guardian*.
Virgin 1215 radio starts.
1994 Mirror group takes control of *Independent*.
Government endorses BBC approach for future.
Government permits ITV company takeovers.
1995 Government proposes new cross-ownership rules.
Channel One (London) cable TV service starts.

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Readers will find further detail and discussion about many features of the period after 1945 up to the 1980s, including media not discussed here, such as film and magazines, in Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media in Britain* (London, Constable, 1983), although it has gone out of print. James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility: the Press and Broadcasting in Britan* (London, Routledge, 4th edn, 1991) has become an established text, regularly updated. It has more historical depth than Tunstall but less range and tabular information. Both books have comprehensive bibliographies, and Tunstall's is annotated. Comparable ground is covered by at least two other useful books: Ralph Negrine, *Politics and the Mass Media in Britain* (London, Routledge, 2nd edn, 1994) and Bob Franklin, *Packaging Politics* (London, Edward Arnold, 1994). An excellent survey of theories and approaches to the study of mass media is Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* (London, Sage, 2nd edn, 1987).

There are always new books about the press and broadcasting, but, as yet, few general and succinct histories. On the press, see Lee (1976), Smith (1979) and Boyce et al. (1978). Koss (1981, 1984) is a two-volume study of the press and the party system; Ayerst (1971) is a history of the (Manchester) *Guardian* but its reach in fact is far broader. Briggs' monumental history of the BBC already ran to four volumes in 1990 (Briggs, 1961–79). A similar ITV enterprise up to 1982 is in three volumes (Sendall, 1982, 1983; Potter, 1989). Smith (1973) contains a useful historical analysis. See also the excellent recent and comprehensive social history by Scannell and Cardiff (1991).

Media people and outsiders regularly publish more or less ephemeral critiques of the media in general and of particular parts. Good examples are by Wintour (1972), Whale (1980), Jenkins (1979, 1986), Hetherington (1985), Tunstall (1971, 1991, 1993), Schlesinger (1978), Leapman (1992) and Snoddy (1993).

Another category includes the relation of media to specific events and issues. Examples include the Glasgow University Media Group (1976), Harrison (1985) and Cumberbatch et al. (1986) on industrial relations; Morrison and Tumber

(1988) on the Falklands war and Morrison (1992) on the Gulf war; Schlesinger (1991) on violence; Golding and Middleton (1980) on welfare policy; Blumler and McQuail (1968), Seymour-Ure (1974) and Crewe and Gosschalk (1995), on politics and elections.

There is a constantly replenished supply of memoirs and biographies (which are often the most enjoyable reading of the lot). Good but random examples are Evans (1984), Milne (1988) and Glover (1994). For a general discussion of press barons see the shrewd and often hilarious account by Coleridge (1993), and also Brendon (1982). For Beaverbrook, Maxwell and Murdoch in particular, see Taylor (1972), Chisholm and Davie (1992); Bower (1991); Belfield and Hird (1994).

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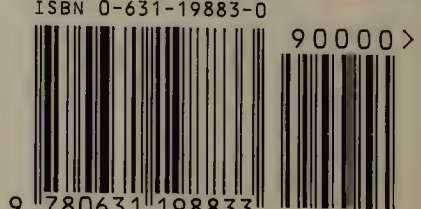

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